

STARS STRIPES®

McGwire evades questions on steroid use
Page 26

Former St. Louis Cardinal Mark McGwire

Military to look into increasing number of Humvee accidents
Page 3

Man charged with plotting to kidnap Letterman's son
Page 9

"Late Show" host David Letterman

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SATURDAY, MARCH 19, 2005

DOD officials want new retirement rules

Proposals aimed at military personnel with 20-plus years

Page 7



Not your typical bargain basement

Page 5

U.S. troops search through DVDs at a local bazaar at a local bazaar at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan. The bazaar is held on the base every Friday and features DVDs, scarves, carpets, clothes, crafts, old coins and interesting helmets (right).



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

Military

Air Force's Predator squadron:

The Air Force plans to enlist the New York Air National Guard to operate one of its unmanned aerial vehicle squadrons, Gov. George Pataki announced Thursday.

It's part of an Air Force initiative that could expand the Predator program to as many as 15 squadrons by 2010. Pataki's statement didn't disclose the location of New York's Predator station.

Navy sonar and whales: Sonar pulsing from a Navy guided-missile destroyer during training exercises near the San Juan Islands near Seattle two years ago was likely loud enough to send killer whales fleeing, according to a government agency report.

The National Marine Fisheries Service report backed up local experts who said sonar from the USS Shoup caused a group of orcas to behave abnormally, apparently trying to avoid the sound.

It contradicts the Navy's previous findings that orcas in Puget Sound's J Pod seemed unaffected by the sonar coming from the Shoup on May 5, 2003.

States

Holocaust families' treasures: A federal judge in Miami tentatively approved a \$25.5 million settlement of claims that U.S. troops plundered the riches of Hungarian Holocaust families from a Nazi train.

U.S. District Judge Patricia Seitz called the participants "peacemakers" and said the settlement gives the government "the opportunity to step up to correct an injustice that may have occurred 60 years ago."

Under the settlement, reached last week and accepted Thursday by Seitz, the Claims Conference on Holocaust issues will oversee distribution of the settlement money to needy Hungarian survivors.

Detroit terror suspect: An immigrant who was once tried on terrorism charges in a case marred by prosecutorial misconduct plans to plead guilty next week to unrelated insurance fraud charges and be deported, his lawyer said.

Ahmed Hannan, 36, of Detroit is tired of fighting the legal system, defense lawyer James Thomas said Thursday.

"After coming to court for five bond hearings and not being able to obtain a bond — and after having been assaulted by another inmate at Wayne County Jail and losing his front teeth — he decided that continuing the legal battle wasn't worth it anymore and he wants to go home," Thomas told the Detroit Free Press.

Wisconsin hotel shooting: A man who fatally shot seven fellow church members and then killed himself at a church meeting in a Brookfield, Wis., hotel had a history of depression and disagreed with his pastor, his mother told a medical examiner.

Shirley Ratzmann said her 44-year-old son, Terry Ratzmann, had a history of depression "relating to job problems for the last couple of years," but had not seen a doctor about it, a medical examiner's report released Thursday shows.

Shirley Ratzmann also said the Living Church of God congregation her son attended had split from another church a few years ago.

"She stated that her son did not agree with the new pastor's point of view, but 'didn't harp on it,'" the report said.

Immigrant smuggling deaths: Some of the charges against a truck driver accused in a deadly smuggling attempt could be dropped after a judge in Houston said prosecutors failed to show he was guilty of charges of harboring illegal immigrants.

U.S. District Judge Vanessa Gilmore on Thursday stopped short of throwing out 19



Pacifist nuns: From left, Ardeth Platte, Carol Gilbert and Jackie Hudson, Dominican nuns from Grand Rapids, Mich., listen to speakers addressing a crowd outside the federal courthouse in downtown Denver in July 2003. A federal appeals court upheld the prison sentences Thursday for the three pacifist nuns accused of using their blood to deface a missile silo in northern Colorado in 2002. The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals noted the potential benefit of civil disobedience, but upheld a jury's decision to convict the nuns on charges of obstructing national defense and damaging government property.

charges against Tyrone Williams, but asked prosecutors and defense attorneys to submit arguments.

Williams, 34, still faces 39 other charges including conspiracy to harbor, conceal and transport illegal immigrants and transporting immigrants in a manner that resulted in serious injury and death.

Yucca Mountain nuclear waste: E-mails from a government hydrologist to his supervisor, copied to several co-workers, led the Energy Department to believe that documents on the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump might have been falsified, government officials said.

The documents concerned 6-year-old U.S. Geological Survey studies of water movement in the planned Nevada dump. USGS scientists validated Energy Department conclusions that water seepage was relatively slow, so radiation would be less likely to escape.

Other studies have pointed to faster water movement. If it turns out there was document falsification and it casts doubt on USGS' conclusions, that could undercut the Energy Department's case for Yucca.

White House van threat: A man who threatened to blow up his van near the White House during inauguration week pleaded guilty Thursday to making a false explosives threat.

Lowell Timmers, 54, of Cedar Springs, Mich., entered the plea in U.S. District Court as part of a deal for a reduced sentence, federal prosecutors said. District Judge Emmett G. Sullivan must still decide whether to accept the agreement for Timmers to serve two years and 10 months in prison. He will be sentenced June 30.

Timmers' threats brought traffic near the White House to a standstill for more than 4½ hours on Jan. 18.

Business

Immigrants at Wal-Mart: Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the world's largest retailer, has agreed to pay \$11 million to settle federal allegations it used hundreds of illegal immigrants to clean its stores, authorities said Friday.

Additionally, 12 businesses that provided contract janitor services to Wal-Mart will pay \$4 million in fines and plead guilty to criminal immigration charges, officials said.

The case against Wal-Mart marks a record dollar amount for a civil immigration settlement, said Homeland Security Assistant Secretary Michael J. Garcia, director of

Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

World

Madrid terror suspects: Spanish police on Friday arrested a Syrian in Madrid who they believe helped recruit radical Islamists to be sent abroad and had ties with suspects charged in the Madrid train bombings of a year ago.

Police, who gave the suspect's name as Mohammad Almalah Dabas, said he was arrested at his home in Madrid as part of the investigation being carried out by the National Court. The Interior Ministry said he and his brother used an apartment in Madrid to house recruits or people passing through. They were assisted by Basel Ghalyoun, a Syrian already jailed for his suspected role in the March 11, 2004, bombings, the ministry said.

Bobby Fischer's citizenship: American chess genius Bobby Fischer, detained in Japan and awaiting deportation to the United States, cleared another hurdle Friday in his bid for Icelandic citizenship after a parliamentary committee granted initial approval.

The motion to grant Fischer citizenship will go before Iceland's 63-member parliament for final approval on Monday, said a member of the General Committee.

Fischer, 62, has been detained in Japan awaiting deportation to the United States.

Prince Charles' wedding: The blessing ceremony following the civil marriage of Prince Charles and

Camilla Parker Bowles will be shown live on television, the prince's Clarence House office said Friday.

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams is to lead the blessing at Windsor Castle following a civil wedding service at Windsor town hall April 8. The civil service will not be shown on TV. Clarence House said.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press



Fischer



Prince Charles

Jordanian's alleged role in deadly blast fuels Shiite protest

BY SAMEER N. YACOB

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — More than 2,000 Shiites marched Friday through Baghdad and some broke into the Jordanian Embassy and raised the Iraqi flag atop it to protest the alleged involvement of a Jordanian in Iraq's single deadliest suicide bombing — a Feb. 28 attack south of Baghdad that killed 125 people.

The protest came just two days after an influential Shiite leader claimed during a Jordanian Assembly meeting that Jordan allegedly wasn't doing enough to prevent terrorists from slipping into Iraq.

In another development, Shiite and Kurdish negotiators reportedly have agreed that the National Assembly should reconvene on March 26 to elect a president and his council, officials said.

At least 2,000 protesters converged on the Jordanian Embassy after finishing Friday prayers at the Shiite mosque in downtown Baghdad. They burned Israeli and Jordanian flags and shouted slogans against King Abdullah II.

They chanted: "Take your enemies away! We do not want to see you!" and "There's no God but God, Abdullah is the enemy of God!"

Three men in green camouflage were later seen on an em-

bassy roof raising an Iraqi flag on a makeshift flagpole. Another flagpole with a crown that previously held the Jordanian flag was bare.

Iraqi police and special forces gathered outside the embassy but failed to prevent demonstrators from reaching the building. The demonstrators later dispersed. It was the largest anti-Jordanian demonstration in a week.

Shiites have staged similar protests in recent days after the Iraqi government on Monday condemned celebrations allegedly held by the family of a Jordanian man suspected of carrying out a terrorist attack that killed 125 people in the city of Hillah. Nearly all the victims were Shiite police and army recruits.

Jordanian government spokeswoman Asma Khader said her country condemned all terrorism and reaffirmed her government's solidarity with the Iraqi people.

"The government condemns strongly any attack against the Iraqi people, in particular the heinous massacre of Hillah which killed scores of innocent people," Khader said. "We have put [in place] intensive measures to track those terrorists and there is security coordination with Iraq to protect the borders of both countries."

Meanwhile, Shiite and Kurdish negotiators reportedly have



Iraqi demonstrators push through a police line on their way to the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad on Friday. More than 2,000 Shiites marched through the streets to protest the alleged involvement of a Jordanian in a Feb. 28 suicide attack south of Baghdad that killed 125 people.

agreed the National Assembly should reconvene on March 26 to elect a president, officials said Friday.

The latest deal came amid reports that not all Kurds were satisfied with assurances given by the Shiite-dominated United Iraqi alliance over the oil-rich city of Kirkuk and a Kurdish militia.

Although Iraqis voted on Jan. 30 to elect 275 people to represent them in their first freely elected

parliament in recent memory, the Kurds and Shiites that emerged as the country's main power brokers have been unable to form a coalition government.

The interim constitution sets no time limit for forming a government after the National Assembly convenes.

But once a president and vice presidents are elected, a prime minister must be chosen within two weeks.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Thursday at least 1,518 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,156 died as a result of hostile action, according to the Defense Department. The figures include four military civilians.

The AP count is seven higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. Thursday.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,380 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 1,047 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ No deaths reported.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Army Spc. Paul M. Heltzel, 39, Baton Rouge, La.; killed Tuesday while on patrol when an explosive detonated in Baghdad; assigned to the National Guard, 2nd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 25th Brigade Combat Team, Eunice, La.

■ Army Staff Sgt. Ricky A. Kieffer, 36, Ovid, Mich.; killed Tuesday by small arms fire in Baghdad; assigned to the National Guard, 1st Battalion, 182nd Field Artillery Regiment, Detroit.

Report: Army reviewing spike in Humvee mishaps

Stars and Stripes

Army officials tracking Humvee problems have seen sharp increases in rollover accidents and deaths in recent months, according to a report in U.S. Today.

The paper reported that the Army is trying to determine whether the spike in accidents is because of the increased use of the vehicles, the inexperience of the drivers,

or the shifting weight caused by armor plating.

According to a U.S. Today analysis of Army records, the numbers of serious vehicle accidents and fatalities in Iraq in the last four months have doubled from the four months prior.

So far this year 14 soldiers have been killed in accidents involving Humvees or trucks.

The most recent rollover death occurred on March 11. Army Spc. Nicholas Eugene Wilson, a member of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division based at Camp Casey, South Korea, died near Ramadi when his Humvee rolled off the road and into a water-filled ditch.

The March issue of Countermeasure, the Army's ground safety magazine, includes a look at the problem titled "On a Roll to

Die" and includes tips like wearing seat belts and securing loose equipment to avoid serious injuries in a rollover accident.

U.S. Today reports that the Army is developing a four-hour driving course for soldiers, particularly those assigned to Iraq, to cover safety and rollover concerns.

Records on Marine Humvee accidents were not available.

U.S. crew helps free vessel

ARLINGTON, Va. — A U.S. Coast cutter, the USCGC Munro, and two British ships saved the crew of a Thai fishing vessel Thursday that had been hijacked by three Somali crewmembers in the Gulf of Aden Wednesday night.

After learning from the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Center in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, that the hijackers had taken over and were demanding an \$800,000 ransom, crew from the Munro — with support from the HMS Invaluable and HMS Nottingham — boarded the Thai-flagged Sirichai Nava 12 around noon on Thursday and freed the hostages.

The Munro is deployed to the region as part of Combined Task Force 150, a coalition maritime force working in the Horn of Africa, the North Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman.

From staff reports

Swedish citizen kidnapped in Iraq released

By MATTIAS KAREN

The Associated Press

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — An Iraqi-born Swedish national kidnapped in Iraq more than a month ago has been freed, police said Thursday.

Minas Ibrahim al-Yousifi was released early Friday, Swedish lawmaker Cecilia Wikstrom said after speaking by telephone to his family.

"He was very relieved but worn out. He's tired, of course, and needs to rest."

Wikstrom said the family did not say whether a ransom had been paid, but she said: "I think that's the case. But I don't have it confirmed."

She said al-Yousifi called his children Friday morning after being freed. "This is a dream come true for them," she said.

A spokeswoman for Sweden's National Police also confirmed his release.

Al-Yousifi's kidnappers, who called themselves "The Martyr al-Isawi Brigades," had threatened to decapitate al-Yousifi if they weren't paid a \$3 million ransom and given a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

He was shown on a videotape made Feb. 17, an assault rifle pointed at his head, and in a videotape made public March 2 saying he expected to be killed.

He was shown pleading for his life and appealing to Pope John Paul II and Sweden's king to help win his release.

Al-Yousifi reportedly was the leader of an Iraqi political group, the Christian Democratic Party.

Sweden's Foreign Ministry has been tight-lipped about the case, saying only that it had been using diplomatic channels to negotiate al-Yousifi's release.

The Scandinavian country's ambassador to Iraq is based in neighboring Jordan.

Wikstrom said al-Yousifi planned to give a news conference Saturday in Baghdad.

More than 200 foreigners have been kidnapped in Iraq, and more than 30 have been killed.

An Italian journalist, Giuliana Sgrena, was released two weeks ago after a month in captivity.



A soldier with Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery Regiment from the 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division watches vehicles line up across the Jisr Diyala Bridge in southeast Baghdad at a traffic checkpoint Wednesday. Hoping to keep terrorists from disrupting the two-day Transitional National Assembly meetings in Baghdad, Iraqi police and U.S. soldiers beefed up security at two checkpoints in southeast Baghdad.

As Iraq's leaders meet, soldiers beef up security

BY VINCE LITTLE
Stars and Stripes

JISR DIYALA, Iraq — Iraqi police and 3rd Infantry Division soldiers at Forward Operating Base Loyalty clamped down the main road this week, hoping to seal off a terrorist concentration to the south and prevent insurgents from disrupting the two-day Transitional National Assembly meetings in Baghdad.

"Ask anyone and they'll tell you, the bad guys are at Salman Pak," said Army Capt. Todd Smith of Mobile, Ala., commander of the 2nd Brigade's Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery Regiment, nicknamed the "Assassins."

"This mission is specific toward the TNA, and keeping them from heading north into Baghdad," he said.

The U.S. soldiers and local Iraqi police bolstered a traffic checkpoint on the south side of the Diyala River — which feeds into the Tigris to the west — and another about a 1½ miles away at the Jisr Diyala circle, a spot that's become a point of contention for coalition forces, Smith said.

Army officials believe terrorist

elements fled south to Salman Pak following last fall's military sweep of Fallujah.

"It seems the enemy really focuses on that traffic circle," Smith said. "They think if they can own it, it would be a symbol of their presence and influence in the area. We've made it a point to occupy that area quite a bit."

The company secured the location three hours before the national assembly got under way and three hours after the sessions ended.

First Lt. Emory Hayes of Ellijay, Ga., the 1st Platoon leader, said his unit arrived on the circle at 4 a.m. both days. A relief platoon stuck around until about 8 p.m. but neither encountered any major contact.

"For the most part, when you present a force of more than just a patrol, those guys tend to scatter," Hayes said. "They don't mess with us."

Lucy, a mixed breed of Rottweiler and German shepherd, took part in Wednesday's traffic checkpoint at the Jisr Diyala Bridge. She sniffed vehicles for plastic explosives and detonating cord.

Her handler, Lorry Botha, a

U.S. contractor from South Africa, said if the Iraqi police or U.S. soldiers think a car looks suspicious, they call on Lucy.

Nothing turned up during the two-day search.

Botha and Lucy live on Forward Operating Base Hope, but they're used throughout the 2nd Brigade area, which also includes Loyalty and Rustamayah.

Since arriving in Iraq about two months ago, Company A has engaged in several joint ventures with local police in southeast Baghdad, including dismounted patrols, intelligence-gathering and the checkpoints. The two sides are planning future raids, Smith said.

Last year, a Washington state National Guard unit monitoring the bridge's checkpoint for the 1st Cavalry Division had a lengthy firefight against terrorist forces along the river. So far, the scene has been quiet for the 1st Battalion.

"We've had [a roadside bomb] go off on us. No one got hurt," Smith said. "But any time we've responded to a situation, everybody leaves. No one's really tried us yet."

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PHOTOS BY VINCE LITTLE/Stars and Stripes

Top: An Iraqi policeman searches the back of a vehicle as soldiers secure the checkpoint at Jisr Diyala Bridge on Wednesday. Above: Lucy, a mixed breed of Rottweiler and German shepherd, sniffs a vehicle for plastic explosives and detonating cord Wednesday. Her handler, Lorry Botha, a U.S. contractor from South Africa who works for Canine Associates International, said the dogs are used throughout the 2nd Brigade area, which covers forward operating bases Loyalty, Rustamayah and Hope.

Army orders more tourniquets for deployed troops

BY TOM BOWMAN
The Baltimore Sun

WASHINGTON — The Army has ordered an additional 172,000 modern tourniquets for soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, and will begin distributing them next month, with the expectation that each soldier will be equipped with the life-saving device sometime this summer, officials said.

"We anticipate theater-wide distribution beginning in mid-April with completion in three or four months, by July or August," said Cynthia Vaughan, a spokeswoman for the Army surgeon general.

There are currently about 44,000 tourni-

quets on hand or on order, officials said, and the manufacturer said a plant in South Carolina has hired additional workers to produce the increased numbers. The Army is expected to request an additional number of the tourniquets so thousands of soldiers set to deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan later this year will have them in new medical kits.

Since at least a month before the war in Iraq began, medical experts in the Army and other services called on the Pentagon to equip every American soldier in the war zone with a modern tourniquet. The simple first aid devices could all but eliminate deaths caused by blood loss from extremity wounds, they argue.

But while the U.S. Central Command, which oversees combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, issued a directive Jan. 6 requiring soldiers to carry them, compliance was left up to the individual units and many did not acquire the devices. One obstacle was that the military wanted to first develop new training manuals and a pouch for carrying the tourniquet, a process expected to take months.

After The Sun highlighted the lack of modern tourniquets for soldiers in an article on March 6, members of Congress last week wrote to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and urged faster action.

"Holding up the fielding of a life-saving

medical kit simply to optimize its carrying pouch suggests a mind-set oblivious to the wartime needs of our soldiers," wrote two Senate Democrats, Richard J. Durbin of Illinois and Carl Levin of Michigan.

Army Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, this week lauded the Army's fast action on the modern tourniquets.

"Everybody's aware of it and everybody will push for this, which is a good thing," he said.

After Rumsfeld received the senators' letter, the Army decided to expedite the tourniquet without waiting for field testing of the new kits, said the Army surgeon general's office.

Bazaar dealers come to troops in Afghanistan

BY KENT HARRIS
Stars and Stripes

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Once every week, U.S. servicemembers get a chance to browse through local merchandise without crossing the perimeter fence.

Friday is bazaar day at American compounds in Bagram and Kabul. Dozens of local merchants set up stalls at designated spots with the goal of separating Americans from their dollars. In return, the vendors offer carpets, scarves, jewelry, swords, knives and various items made from wood, brass and stone.

Sgt. 1st Class Napoleon Cunningham, a soldier from Bahrenhausen, Germany, said he's been in country only about three weeks.

"I've been here every week that I've been [at Bagram]," he said, motioning to the nearby stalls that were somewhat hidden under a series of plastic covers designed to keep out most of the rain.

He was the one shopping, but his wife, Michaela, back in Germany was the one benefiting. "It's basically all for her," he said of the bag in his hand. "Ex-

cept for the movies."

Yes, the movies. The DVDs, featuring hundreds of options from American television and cinema, obviously aren't of Afghan origin. Some of those around the bazaar say the DVDs are probably from Pakistan.

Some are pretty good copies, buyers say. Others aren't. But because it costs just a few dollars to

get DVDs that sometimes feature four or five movies—including some still making first runs in the States—not many customers seem to be complaining.

"I haven't tried mine yet," Chief Warrant Officer 3 Rogel Pagaduan said. He was referring to DVDs he had bought a week earlier. This week, he paid \$10 each for three blankets.

"I think it's a pretty good deal," he said.

But maybe not as good as the one Capt. Peter Santos said he got. He purchased five carved wooden chests — each personally engraved with a name — for much less than he would have paid in Germany.

"I'm going to come and pick them up in two weeks," he said. "I got one for each member of my family."



Sgt. 1st Class Napoleon Cunningham takes advantage of the bazaar Friday on Bagram Air Base to buy gifts to send back to his wife in Germany.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ABRAMS Stars and Stripes

Above: The bazaar at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, features a wide array of goods from local vendors.

Bazaars are held every Friday at Bagram and Kabul, and on Saturdays at Kandahar.

Below: Soldiers carry away treasures bought at the bazaar.

Many purchases come after some haggling. The buyers often end up paying more than they would if they were in a village off base, but those kinds of shopping opportunities come rarely, if ever. The sellers admit they're making more off the troops than they could off base.

"I can sell more here," said Ayatollah Nour, who was offering a variety of locally made carpets. He characterized business as "not bad."

He said some of the carpets he sells take a month to make. Some take three months. Like many merchants, he spends about half the week selling wares at different coalition military compounds around the region.

Maj. John Tammes said the bazaar is a good deal for merchants, servicemembers and local villagers. Merchants pay the equivalent of about \$180 each time they come on base. The military puts that money into a local bank before using it to fund a variety of local projects.

He said there are 133 total slots for merchants at Bagram, with most limited to selling their goods every two weeks. They often line up their trucks on Thursday afternoons outside the gate to get a good spot for the next day.



Staff Sgt. Clint Kramer said a group of soldiers at Bagram takes a look at the merchandise before it goes on sale.

"We walk through to make sure they aren't selling merchandise that's prohibited and not going to clear customs," he said.

Even those responsible for checking items get a chance to buy.

"There's a lot of good junk out there," said Spc. Don Henry, a member of Kramer's customs crew.

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Two men indicted in \$4M KBR contract fraud case

BY CHARLES R. BABCOCK
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A former manager for a Halliburton Co. subsidiary and an alleged accomplice in Kuwait defrauded the U.S. government out of nearly \$4 million by inflating the price of supplying fuel tankers for military operations in Kuwait in 2003, prosecutors said Thursday.

The 10-count indictment, returned Wednesday by a federal grand jury in Illinois, is believed to be the first criminal case of contracting fraud stemming from the war in Iraq, officials said. Halliburton, which Vice President Dick Cheney headed from 1995 to

Employee, accomplice allegedly inflated price of supplying fuel tankers for military operations in Kuwait in 2003

2000, is one of the government's largest contractors there.

Jan Paul Miller, the U.S. attorney for the Central District of Illinois, said in an interview that the investigation began about a year ago after Kellogg Brown & Root Inc., which holds a giant logistics contract to supply military needs in the Middle East, informed the government it had suspicions of wrongdoing.

According to the indictment, Jeff Alex Mazon, 36, who worked

for KBR in Kuwait, schemed with Ali Hijazi, of La Nouvelle General Trading & Contracting Co., to assure La Nouvelle would win a contract for storing and dispensing fuel at a military airport in Kuwait. KBR had estimated the work would cost about \$685,000, and La Nouvelle bid \$1.67 million, the government said. Mazon then allegedly inflated that and another bid by a factor of 3.3 and awarded the contract to Hijazi's firm for \$5.5 million — nearly \$4 million more than the company's original bid.

Around September 2003, soon after Mazon left KBR, Hijazi allegedly gave Mazon a \$1 million check for his favorite treatment of La Nouvelle.

Each man was charged with four counts of fraud against the United States and six counts of wire fraud.

Mazon, who was arrested Wednesday in Georgia, appeared in court Thursday in Atlanta before being sent to Illinois for an arraignment hearing, according to

Sharon Paul, a spokeswoman for Miller's office.

An Army command in Rock Island, Ill., administered the logistics contract.

Democrats in Congress have criticized Halliburton's work supporting the war in Iraq, especially a separate \$2.5 billion no-bid contract to repair oil fields. Auditors turned up \$1.8 billion in "unsupportable costs" in the \$10.5 billion logistics contract cited in the indictment, which KBR won on a competitive bid. Despite those findings and a recommendation to withhold some of the payments, the Army decided last month to continue paying Halliburton in full, plus performance bonuses.

'America, you have a recruiting problem'

Army vice chief of staff says he's worried about the future of all-volunteer military force

By JON R. ANDERSON
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army's vice chief of staff says he's been losing sleep lately over the future of the all-volunteer force.

"What keeps me awake at night is what this all-volunteer force will look like in 2007," Gen. Richard Cody told lawmakers recently on Capitol Hill. It's a concern others should share, he says.

"I think it ought to keep all of you awake," he told a gathering of reporters Wednesday.

Nearly 31 years since it replaced the draft Army of both world wars, Korea and Vietnam, the all-volunteer force is facing its first real test, Cody said.

"This is the first time we've taken the all-volunteer force into an extended fight," Cody said. "It's not a Kosovo, it's not a Bosnia, it's not a [Multinational Force and Observers peacekeeping mission] in the Sinai," he said. "It is a war. On any given day, we have 156,000 soldiers for 12 months in a combat zone, as well as — still — all those other commitments."

It's a pace that could be crippling, he said.

"I worry about the soldiers with their second and third tour by '07 since 9/11," Cody said.

Indeed, for the first time since Vietnam, the sheer volume of operations means even relatively junior troops are already becoming veterans of multiple combat tours. Soldiers who served as privates in the 3rd Infantry Division as it invaded Iraq, for example, are now returning to Iraq as corporals and sergeants.

The all-volunteer force was born on July 1, 1973, in the wake of years of protest against the draft during the war in Vietnam. Ever since, the Army has traded orders to serve for "He all you can be" and more recently, "Army of One" advertising campaigns to convince young Americans to raise their right hands and wear the uniform.

But two years into the war in Iraq, recruiting efforts are beginning to show cracks.

For the first two months of the year, both Army and Marine Corps recruiters have failed to meet their quotas to sign up new volunteers.

Selling service

"That, correctly so, is a concern," Gen. Peter Pace, the vice chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff told Pentagon employees Friday during a town hall meeting.

While he said more recruiters and adver-



Gen. Richard A. Cody's two sons, Capt. Clint Cody, left, and Capt. Tyler Cody, both with the 101st Airborne Division, pin four stars on his shoulders at the Pentagon auditorium July 2, 2004. Cody's sons, as well as three nephews who are also in the Army, offer the general good intelligence on what troops are talking about.

Sons, nephews help Cody keep tabs

Gen. Richard Cody has a small squad of scouts scattered among Army units sending him muddy boots-level intelligence on what the troops are talking about.

"I have the fortune of having these young leaders, who happen to be my sons and nephews, that talk to me about their soldiers," the Army's vice chief of staff said Thursday.

Cody's two sons are both captains and combat vets in the 101st Airborne Division. One is getting ready for his second combat tour, the other his third.

tising dollars are being thrown into the mix to help tilt the balance, Pace encouraged everyone in uniform to help in the effort.

"All of us should be talking about the value of service to country," Pace said. "Not just about military service to country, but about young folks finding a niche in this society where they can serve the country for some time, in my mind, pay back a little bit what they've gotten from this country."

Cody agrees. And key for convincing young folks is what he calls the "influencers."

"We're seeing right now mothers and fathers and school teachers and other influ-

Cody also has three nephews wearing Army green as well. One of them is down-range now.

"So I get some direct input," Cody said. His boys offer glimpses of what troops wrestle with the traditional chain of command could never offer.

"There's not many layers between a father and his sons," Cody said. "I get some pretty good insights as to what's bothering their soldiers, why their soldiers would reenlist and why they won't reenlist."

—Jon R. Anderson

encers that maybe are not talking about service to this nation," Cody said. "So, when you say, 'America, you have a recruiting problem,' I say, 'America, you have a recruiting problem.'"

In the end, says Cody, it comes down to simple questions like, "What kind of Army do you want to have? Is service to this country important to you?"

Stretching the force

For those already in uniform, Cody said the Army must do a better job of providing good housing and basic quality of life, especially as the service adds 30,000 soldiers to its active ranks and 70,000 troops now for-

ward-based in Europe and Asia are repositioned back to the United States.

"The net result is going to have 100,000 more soldiers back in the continental United States on the active side," Cody said, adding that existing bases will have to be expanded to handle the influx.

This comes, he said, even as the Army has had to mortgage base maintenance accounts to help fund the war in Iraq.

The Army he said has cut base funding by 30 percent. Four weeks ago, however, Army leaders decided to tighten their belt in other areas and have come up with about \$3 billion to reduce the base maintenance shortfall to 10 percent.

Meanwhile, the basic tools of the trade have taken a beating as well.

Cody said the Army has lost 79 aircraft, three companies worth of tanks, and three companies worth Bradley Fighting Vehicles over the past three and half years of non-stop combat that began with the invasion of Afghanistan.

"This fight," Cody said, "has taken a toll."

If left unchecked, he said, that toll could have dire consequences.

"If we as a country don't show our appreciation — and that appreciation is really in how well we resource them, how well we take care of the families, how well we get the balance right so that we can give some predictability into the Guard and Reserves as well as into our active force — then I think we will have stretched this all volunteer force."

While Cody stopped short of warning that the military could have to return to a draft, some experts say that may not be too far over the horizon.

Close to breaking

Some corners of Congress have already been calling for a draft for more than a year now.

New York Rep. Charles Rangel, a Democrat, introduced legislation last year calling for exactly that. Although his bill made no headway, the issue continues to receive debate as the war in Iraq drags on.

"The all-volunteer force is close to breaking right now," said retired Maj. Gen. Edward Atkeson, now a prolific author on military affairs and a senior fellow at the Institute of Land Warfare. "When it does break, that's when you'll see the draft come back."

Atkeson said cracks are already showing with the use of stop loss to keep troops in beyond their active contracts and massive reserve mobilizations.

"The worst-case scenario is that things just continue as they are."

Email Jon R. Anderson at andersonj@stripes.com

New Englanders fear panel will target local bases

By RYAN LENZ
The Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine — The absence of a New Englander on the commission named to review the Pentagon's list of proposed base closings has left the region without the leverage those pushing to keep bases alive fear they need.

The nine-member panel announced this week includes commissioners from California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Nevada, Tennessee and Virginia. "What they bring a spectrum of experience and perspective, many argue that being unfamiliar with

New England could be detrimental to the decisions they make."

"The law is a very good means of making the nation swallow a bitter pill without blaming anybody... but we don't know that we have commissioners who know the area," said William McDonough, a retired Navy captain with Save Our Shipyard, which has lobbied for months to save Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld must give a list of bases the Pentagon wants to close to the commission by May. The commissioners then review — and can change — the list before passing

along final recommendation to President Bush.

The Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and Brunswick Naval Air Station in Maine and Naval Submarine Base in Connecticut, as well as Hanscom Air Force Base and Natick Labs in Massachusetts, have been mentioned as possible targets for closure.

But without a commissioner intimately familiar with those bases, the impact they have on surrounding communities and their importance in homeland defense missions, military analysts argue mistakes could be made in this year's closings.

"The commissioners will have a greater affinity for the places they know than for the places they don't," said Loren Thompson, of the Lexington Institute, who has predicted New England to fare poorly. "It does further stack the deck."

State officials and congressional leaders of both parties from Maine to Connecticut have spent months pushing for a New Englander to be appointed to the commission with hopes such a presence would stem base closures in the region.

Without such a representative, they feared efforts to save the re-

gion's military bases could fall on deaf ears once the Pentagon releases its list.

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Sen. Olympia Snowe, said the nominations were disappointing. The Maine and New Hampshire delegations had nominated retired Lt. Gen. Robert Wingless and former congressman David Emery to represent the region.

"There is so much at stake that I think it required and compelled the administration to include a regional balanced commission," Snowe said. "I think our nominees deserved to be considered."

IN THE STATES

Judge orders removal of Schiavo's feeding tube

Congress reportedly subpoenas brain-damaged Fla. woman

The Associated Press

PINELLAS PARK, Fla. — The presiding judge in the case of Terri Schiavo ruled Friday that the feeding tube keeping the brain-damaged woman alive must be removed, despite efforts by congressional Republicans to block the move by seeking her appearance at hearings.

Pinellas Circuit Judge George Greer refused a request from U.S. House attorneys to delay the removal, which he had previously ordered to take place at 1 p.m. EST. Greer determined that it should go forward about an hour after another judge issued a temporary delay blocking the tube's removal. "I have had no cogent reason why the [congressional] committee should intervene," Greer told attorneys in a conference call, adding that last-minute action by Congress does not invalidate years of court rulings.

There was no immediate word on when the tube might be removed.

Attorneys seeking to block the removal vowed to appeal.

Michael Schiavo has waged a yearslong court battle with his parents-in-law, contending his wife, who doctors say has been in a persistent vegetative state since 1990, would not want to live that way. Her parents dispute that, and say she could get better.

The tube has been removed twice in the past and then reinserted as the battle continued.

Friday's ruling came after U.S. Senate and House committees in the Republican-controlled Congress issued subpoenas for Schiavo, her husband, and her caregivers to appear at hearings on March 25 and March 28, which would in effect keep her alive for the time being.

The Pinellas Park hospital where Schiavo lives received a subpoena Friday morning, spokeswoman Louise Cleary said. Officials there did not say who was subpoenaed or disclose their next steps.



A Florida Circuit Court judge ordered the removal of a feeding tube for Terri Schiavo, pictured above with her mother. Earlier Friday, U.S. Senate Republicans reportedly issued subpoenas for Schiavo and her husband to testify before the Health Committee.

House, Senate pass conflicting budget legislation

BY ALAN FRAM

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Senate-passed \$2.6 trillion budget proposal that ignores President Bush's proposal to bring savings from Medicaid is just one step in Congress' protracted effort to make fiscal decisions for next year, White House spokesman Scott McClellan said Friday.

McClellan made his remark the morning after the House and Senate approved doubling budgets with reciprocal appetites for Bush's recipe of curbing rampant

deficits by reining benefit programs for the first time since 1997. The House's outline endorsed even deeper reductions in Medicaid and other programs than Bush proposed.

"Congress is still working on an agreement for a budget framework," McClellan told reporters traveling with Bush on Air Force One to Florida. "There's still a legislative process to go."

The House budget would cut up to \$20 billion from planned Medicaid spending over the next five years, a 1 percent reduction that would more than double what

Bush's savings are worth. Overall, it seeks \$69 billion in reductions from agriculture, student loans and other benefits, \$18 billion more than Bush.

But in the Senate, rebellious moderate Republicans joined Democrats in voting 52-48 to eliminate all \$14 billion in Medicaid savings that chamber's budget had proposed. Senators also voted to roll back Bush's plans to cut billions of dollars from education, community development, water projects and other programs.

"It is not the bill I would have chosen if I'd had a magic wand,"

said Senate Budget Committee Chairman Judd Gregg, R-N.H.

"But this is the middle of the process and I hope it will improve."

Highlighting unease by Republicans in both chambers, the House plan was approved by 218-214, while the Senate's squeaked through on a 51-49 vote.

With an 11th-hour amendment nearly doubling the size of the Senate budget's tax cuts, four moderate Republicans voted "no" and Vice President Dick Cheney was on hand in case he was needed to break a tie vote.

Senators also voted to restore money Bush proposed cutting from education and local police, fire and emergency workers. They also voted to kill Bush's plan to combine community development block grants, a favorite of many mayors, with dozens of other programs and cutting them by about \$2 billion.

The budget sets overall tax and spending targets for later bills that make actual changes in programs and tax laws. Some policies the budget suggests may never be enacted, though the votes often are precursors for what lawmakers eventually do.



Lil' Kim, whose real name is Kimberly Jones, leaves Manhattan federal court Thursday in New York. Kim was convicted of perjury and conspiracy in connection with a shootout outside a Manhattan radio station in 2001.

Rapper Lil' Kim facing jail time for perjury conviction

BY LARRY NEUMEISTER

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Grammy-winning hip-hop star Lil' Kim could face years in prison when she is sentenced in June for lying about a shootout outside a radio station.

Her convictions Thursday on three counts of perjury and one of conspiracy each carry terms of up to five years in prison, but as a first-time offender she was expected to receive far less than 20 years. Any term would make her the first major female rapper to do time.

The 29-year-old performer, known for her raunchy raps and revealing outfits, was acquitted of obstruction of justice.

She and her assistant, who also was convicted, shook their heads as the verdicts were delivered, and supporters broke out in sobs.

Lil' Kim declined to comment outside court, but in a statement issued later, she said she was "disappointed" by the verdict.

"Throughout my life, I have always lived with adversity and will continue to have faith and do good for my family, friends and fans," she said.

Both women are free on bond and will be sentenced June 24.

The former sidekick and girlfriend of the late Notorious B.I.G. had testified that she didn't notice two close friends at the scene of the 2001 gun battle — her manager, Damon Butler, and Saff "Gutta" Jackson. Both men have since pleaded guilty to gun charges.

The shootout occurred outside WQHT, known as Hot 97, when Lil' Kim's entourage crossed paths with a rival rap group, Capone-N-Noreaga. Kim's entourage confronted them about the song "Bang, Bang" from a Capone-N-Noreaga album, which contained a scathing insult to Kim from her longtime rival, Foxy Brown. A shootout erupted, leaving one man injured.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Cathy Seibel told jurors that the 4-foot-11 Lil' Kim had repeatedly lied to them, just as she did to the grand jury.

The prosecutor belittled the defense claim that the sunglasses-wearing Lil' Kim didn't notice her two close friends at the scene of the crime. "You would have to believe they were magic sunglasses that only block out your friends who were shooting people," Seibel told the jury.

Hot 97 is the same station where the bosses of 50 Cent and The Game traded bullets last month.

Sharon to visit U.S.

WASHINGTON — President Bush will host Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon at his Texas ranch on April 11 to help advance the Middle East peace process, the White House said Friday.

Invitations to the president's private ranch at Crawford, Texas, typically are reserved for top diplomatic efforts, and this one comes as Bush has been citing progress in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"The president looks forward to discussing with Prime Minister Sharon a wide range of key bilateral and regional issues, including the search for peace in the Middle East and the war on terrorism," White House press secretary Scott McClellan said in a statement.

Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas plans to visit Bush in Washington in coming weeks. Abbas would be the first Palestinian leader to visit the U.S. capital since the outbreak of Palestinian-Israeli violence in September 2000.

From The Associated Press

Woman to organize an Islamic service

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Even as Amina Wadud was preparing to lead an Islamic prayer service, her plans drew sharp criticism from Muslim religious leaders in the Middle East.

Wadud, a professor of Islamic studies at Virginia Commonwealth University, was scheduled to lead a two-hour service Friday at Synod House at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan.

The event was meant to draw attention to the "second-class status" of women in Muslim spiritual life and Muslim life in general, said Sara Q. Nomani, an author and former Wall Street Journal reporter who is lead organizer of the prayer.

"We are taking actions that no one else would have dared to think about before," she told The New York Times for Friday editions. "Nobody cared that we didn't have a place in the faith."

Muslim leaders denounced the plans.

The sheik of Cairo's Al-Azhar mosque, one of the top world's Islamic institutions, said Islam permits women to lead other women in prayer but not a congregation with men in it.

"A woman's place is private," Sheikh Sayed Tantawi wrote in a column in the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram in which he was asked about Wadud's planned prayer. "When she leads men in prayer, in this case, it's not proper for them to look at the woman whose body is in front of them. Even if they see it in their daily life, it shouldn't be in situations of worship, where the main point is humility and modesty."

Muslim leaders in New York were also wary of the plan.

"My concern is a backlash," Aisha al-Adawiya, head of New York-based Women in Islam, told The Times. "This kind of change has to come from within the community. It's being driven from outside."

Some critics have accused Nomani of using the event to publicize a book she has written about women and Islam.

Letterman worker charged in plot

Man charged in plan to kidnap kidnap 'Late Show' host's baby

BY JOHN MACDONALD
The Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. — David Letterman and his girlfriend thanked law enforcement officials for uncovering a plot to kidnap their 16-month-old son from their Montana ranch, saying they were "forever grateful."

The man charged Thursday with hatching the scheme, Kelly A. Frank, worked as a painter at the talk-show host's



Frank

2,700-acre spread near the rugged Rocky Mountain Front. The 43-year-old Frank, according to police, had planned to hold the boy and his nanny for \$5 million ransom.

In a statement issued by the publicist for Letterman's production company, World Wide Pants, Letterman and his girlfriend, Re-

gina Lasko, praised the FBI and local authorities.

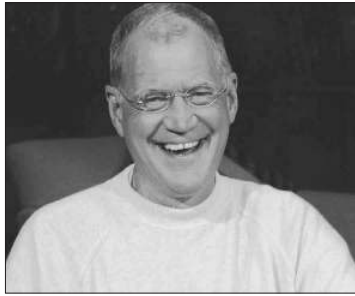
"We will be forever grateful for their tireless efforts and determination to vigorously pursue this situation," the couple said in the statement.

Steven Rubenstein, a spokesman for World Wide Pants, said he could not comment on whether Letterman's family was in Montana at the time of Frank's arrest.

Mike Ferriter of the state Department of Corrections said Frank had been working as a painter at Letterman's ranch west of Choteau in north-central Montana and apparently confided in an acquaintance earlier this month of his plan to kidnap Letterman's son and nanny for ransom.

According to the affidavit filed by Teton County Attorney Joe Coble, Frank had told the acquaintance that he knew Letterman and his family would be visiting their Montana home soon, and that Frank had a key to the house, knew where the baby slept and intended to kidnap the nanny "so that she could take care of the child."

The acquaintance contacted au-



"Late Show" host David Letterman and his girlfriend, Regina Lasko, thanked authorities for their efforts. Police charged a man Thursday on allegations he was plotting to kidnap Letterman's young son and nanny from the talk-show host's Montana home.

thorities Sunday, according to the affidavit. Sheriff George Armstrong told the weekly Choteau Acantha newspaper that Frank was arrested the following morning at another area ranch where he was working.

Besides the felony solicitation charge, Frank is charged with fel-

ony theft for allegedly overcharging Letterman for painting, and a misdemeanor charge of obstruction for lying to an investigator about the alleged plot.

Frank is jailed in neighboring Pondera County on \$600,000 bail.

Associated Press writer Len Iwanski contributed to this story.

ATM 'card skimming' is growing problem

BY BEVERLEY WANG
The Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. — The recent theft of thousands of dollars from people who used their debit cards at a Manchester ATM is one type of identity theft becoming more common as consumers increasingly rely on electronic transactions.

The crime known as "card skimming" takes three steps: Using up to 35 cameras placed over ATM card slots, thieves steal account information stored on a debit card's magnetic strip. A dummy number pad, camera or stealthy glance over a customer's shoulder captures the PIN. Those who know where to look can easily find Web sites that sell blank magnetic cards and card-printing machines.

"It's a very popular type of crime these days," said Connie Stratton, a senior assistant attorney general in New Hampshire's consumer protection bureau. "Cards are simple to make," she said.

"You can buy bundles of cards on the Inter-

net — you can buy them with the electronic strip on them, you can buy them with the strip not on them — there are a number of varieties."

Two women who used a Bank of America ATM on Monday at the T.J. Maxx plaza on South Willow Street reported having money withdrawn without their knowledge at a Saugus, Mass., ATM on Tuesday. One woman said \$4,500 was taken from her account, another said \$1,900 was taken.

But according to Saugus police, at least six more people were victims of card skimming at that Manchester ATM. About \$15,000 was stolen, said Saugus Detective Dana Bates. Bates said his department was looking into possible connections to the 30-some skimming complaints it had received since January.

"It's been going up in the last six months, I'll tell you that," he said.

Nationally, of 635,173 consumer complaints reported to the Federal Trade Commission last year, the greatest number by far — 39 percent — were related to identity theft, accord-

ing to a February report. Broken down, 28 percent of those complaints were for credit card fraud, 18 percent for bank fraud.

Manchester, Nashua, Concord, Dover and Salem are the state's top identity theft hotspots, with credit card and bank fraud taking first and third place on the list of most reported identity theft complaints, according to the report.

The issue is a priority for New Hampshire banks.

"There's a huge amount of resources being committed to identity theft prevention," said Jerry Little, president of the New Hampshire Bankers Association. Little said ATMs are checked daily during cash drops, but that customers also must look for signs of tampering. "In ATMs, you need to look at the hardware and make sure it's what you recognize. If it doesn't feel right, don't use it," he said.

Wireless technology and online marketplaces are making it easier to steal financial information, Little said, and thieves are now turning to a new target — gas stations that let customers pay at the pump. Thieves who manage to install wireless readers on a pump can easily steal credit card information to use or sell.

"The criminal can be sitting across the street in a parking lot with a laptop, reading the number instantly over a wireless phone line," Little said.

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"I don't think anybody expected this. I can't say I was running around planning it. I'd like to say that's how effective my method is. Look, man, I riveted the entire nation on — what did I rivet the entire nation's attention on? It's just boilerplate now. ... There's no analysis of the content of what I said."

Ward Churchill

University of Colorado professor



Professor tires of fight but stands by comment

BY DAN ELLIOTT

The Associated Press

BOULDER, Colo. — Stacks of papers sit on a sun-drenched table in the home of University of Colorado professor Ward Churchill, some full of praise and others full of dark threats and unprintable insults.

In one message, liberal scholar Neom Chomsky calls Churchill's achievements of inestimable value, while an e-mail in another pile warns: "If you ever come to Florida, I will personally bash your [expensive] brains in."

This is Churchill's new life: Since January, he has been at the center of a firestorm over free speech for likening some Sept. 11 victims to Adolf Eichmann, a Nazi architect of the Holocaust.

In a two-hour interview with The Associated Press, Churchill, 57, said he won't back down as the school investigates him to see if he can be fired. But he wearily acknowledged the uproar now dominates his life and makes it difficult to focus on his job as a tenured professor of ethnic studies.

In his essay written shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, Churchill called some World

Trade Center victims "little Eichmanns." The essay drew scant attention until earlier this year, when it resurfaced after Churchill was invited to speak at Hamilton College in upstate New York. Relatives of the dead and

"It's not about me, and it's not about 'little Eichmanns,' either. ... That's why I'm so in-your-face. You will not ignore this, purport to innocence while applauding genocide. You may not be directly culpable, but you're not innocent."

the governors of New York and Colorado denounced Churchill and the speech was canceled because of death threats against him.

Now, university administrators are investigating Churchill's words to determine whether to recommend his dismissal. CU spokeswoman Pauline Hale said she could not comment on details,

but the results are scheduled to be released March 28.

The latest charges are that Churchill plagiarized others' work and threatened physical violence against critics. He denies both claims, though he said he did threaten to sue a woman he said was harassing his family and spreading lies.

Churchill has many critics, some on his own campus.

He said his critics have mangled the facts in their rush to condemn him.

He said the inquiry is not merely an investigation of his work but a pretext for a broader campaign to discourage critical thinking and reduce higher education to "an advanced vocation" where students are taught skills useful to corporations.

"It's not about me, and it's not about 'little Eichmanns,' either," he said.

Churchill acknowledged he is confrontational when he tries to make Americans see the attacks of Sept. 11 not as unprovoked assaults on an innocent people, but as the consequences of years of U.S. policies he likens to genocide.

"That's why I'm so in-your-face. You will not ignore this, purport to innocence while applauding genocide. You may not be directly culpable, but you're not innocent," he said.

Rehnquist, looking frail, made his first and only public appearance since the fall in January, when he swore in President Bush. Earlier this week, Rehnquist presided over a two-hour, closed-door meeting of the Judicial Conference of the United States, the policy-making body of the federal judiciary. Attendees said he showed good humor and moved under his own strength.

Rehnquist's illness has led to speculation that he will step down, giving the court its first opening since 1994.

Groups save horses bound for slaughter

By SANDRA CHEREB

The Associated Press

RENO, Nev. — Although a new law lets the federal government sell certain wild mustangs for horsemeat, the first ones auctioned off have been spared from the slaughterhouse.

The 200 animals from Nevada that Wild Horses Wyoming bought from the Bureau of Land Management are roaming free on thousands of acres near Laramie, Wyo.

"We are in the business of saving horses," said Sean

Mater, one of five partners in the company.

In December, Congress replaced a 34-year-old ban on slaughtering any mustang with a statute that allows the sale of older and unwanted horses for their meat.

The animals up for sale are captured during periodic government roundups aimed at reducing the wild population.

About 67,000 wild horses and burros roam the Western range, about 9,000 more than the BLM has said the natural forage can sustain.

BLM and Interior Department officials have said they hope to find homes for horses affected by the law. But wild horse advocates have called the new law inhumane and fear the animals will end up as horsemeat for human consumption overseas or as dog

food.

Wild Horses Wyoming and rescue groups are trying to save the horses by buying them.

Wild Horses Wyoming purchased the mustangs, all of them mares, for \$50 each. The sale was announced March 1.

Mater, who lives in Fort Collins, Colo., said the company hopes to secure more land and eventually acquire up to 5,000 horses.

"That's our goal," said Bill Clark, a Fort Collins real estate broker and another partner in the venture.

The group is soliciting money for its efforts by selling horse sponsorships.

Mater said the goal is to use the sponsorship money to acquire land that will sustain the horses for the rest of their lives.

"Putting them on good rangeland allows them to forage for themselves, and remain in

that same mode that they were in out on the range," he said.

Lifersavers Wild Horse Rescue in Lancaster, Calif., has 120 horses on 46 acres of land, and plans to buy 10 mustangs under the new law, said Jill Starr, the group's leader.

The Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary in Hot Springs, S.D., cares for 400 horses on 11,000 acres of privately owned land but has not immediate plans to take in more mustangs, office manager Pati Duff said.

N.H. judge rules against gun picture in yearbook

The Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. — A high school senior's bid to have his shotgun in his yearbook portrait was rejected Thursday by a federal judge.

U.S. District Judge Steven McLaughlin ruled that Blake Douglass failed to prove that school officials violated his First Amendment rights.

He said the decision to withhold publishing the picture was made by student editors, whose decisions are protected by the First Amendment.

The boy's lawyer, who had maintained the school acted to ban the photo, said she would appeal to a higher court if the Londonderry High School student decides to keep fighting the school district.

"I think the First U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals would like to hear from us," she said, "but it's going to be Blake's decision," his lawyer, Penny Dean said.

A telephone message left at the boy's home Thursday night was not returned immediately.

Douglass, an avid trap shooter, wanted his broken-optimism over his shoulder the way he says seniors in earlier yearbooks have used musical instruments to illustrate their hobbies.

The school recently banned all props from senior photos.

Douglass had maintained the decision was made by the yearbook's faculty adviser and other school officials, but McLaughlin found otherwise.

The yearbook, he wrote, "is the product of volunteer efforts by students."

Last week, McLaughlin hinted that he would rule against the senior when he consulted and him for bringing the case forward.

"I'm awfully proud of you for bringing the case. You stood up for your First Amendment rights," McLaughlin said. "If it doesn't go well for you, I want you to know you did the right thing."

Rehnquist still debating return to bench

By HOPE YEN

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, ailing with thyroid cancer, might return to the bench Monday when the Supreme Court comes back from a two-week break.

Rehnquist, 80, hasn't decided whether to sit for arguments, court spokeswoman Kathy Arberg said Friday. She did not provide any update on his condition.

This is the first time in months

the court hasn't unequivocally declared Rehnquist would not be on the bench when justices hear arguments.

Rehnquist last sat for cases in the fall but was hospitalized Oct. 22 and underwent a tracheotomy to help him breathe.

He has been working regularly at the court for many weeks, presiding over private meetings of the justices, reading transcripts of the arguments and voting on decisions, but not appearing for arguments.

IN THE WORLD



French President Jacques Chirac, right, guides Russian President Vladimir Putin after lunch Friday at the Elysee Palace in Paris.

Putin holding talks with top European leaders

BY KRISTINE OLLIVIER

The Associated Press

PARIS — Russian President Vladimir Putin met with his French counterpart Jacques Chirac in Paris on Friday before informal talks with three European leaders on prickly issues such as democratic reform in Russia and the nuclear aspirations of Iran.

Chirac greeted Putin at the Elysee Palace, where military guards in plumed hats stood at attention. The two leaders were having lunch one-on-one — an opportunity for Chirac to raise difficult issues without putting Putin on the spot in front of others.

A full schedule was planned for Putin before the talks with Chirac, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and Spanish Prime Min-

More world stories
on Page 14

ister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero.

At the Elysee, Putin and Chirac greeted Russian writers taking part in the annual Paris book fair. As a teenager, Chirac studied Russian and translated a few classics of the language, and Putin thanked him for his "love and devotion" to the country's literature.

Later, Putin will have a private tour of a French defense center for air operations in Taverny, north of Paris. That visit was seen as a repaid favor after Chirac in April became the first Western leader to tour Russia's top-secret Titov space control center.

Friendly persuasion were the bywords of the daylong visit.

France sees the outstretched hand as the best way to elicit change, especially since Russia is now at the European Union's doorstep.

Eight former Soviet bloc countries joined the EU in May.

The three European leaders "consider that they must have a relationship of confidence with Russia and avoid ... a situation where Russia would be isolated," said Thomas Gomart, a specialist on Russia with the French Institute of International Relations.

A range of potentially sensitive issues were likely to be discussed during Friday's talks. They included Putin's perceived backsliding on democracy in Russia, as well as Iraq, the Middle East peace process and Iran's suspected nuclear program.

Prosecutors: Ukrainians smuggled arms to Iran, China

BY ALEKSANDAR VASOVIC

The Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — Ukrainian weapons dealers smuggled 18 nuclear-capable cruise missiles to Iran and China during Leonid Kuchma's rule, prosecutors said Friday, adding to mounting evidence of high-level corruption under the watch of the former leader already linked to possible illicit arms sales to Iraq.

The Associated Press had reported exclusively Feb. 3 that a government probe into lucrative illicit weapons sales by officials loyal to Kuchma had led to secret indictments or arrests of at least six arms dealers accused of selling missiles to Iran and China.

On Friday, the Prosecutor General's office said KhS5 cruise missiles were smuggled out of Ukraine four years ago.

"The proceedings against persons implicated have been forwarded to the Kiev Court of Appeals and are being heard behind closed doors," the statement said.

It was unclear how many people were implicated, and whether charges have been filed against them. Prosecutors said the missiles, which have a range of 1,860 miles, were sold illegally and were not exported by Ukrainian enterprises.

Last month, the AP reported that missiles smuggled out of Ukraine purportedly ended up in Iran and China, although export documents known as end-user certificates recorded the final recipient of some 20 KhS5 missiles as "Russia's Defense Ministry," according to a letter written by a lawmaker to current President Viktor Yushchenko.

The letter, by lawmaker Hrihorii Omelchenko, did not say what happened to the other missiles. The KhS5, known in the West as the AS-15, is designed to carry a nuclear warhead with a 200-kiloton yield. Omelchenko, who also serves as a reserve colonel in the intelligence service, had made his letters available to The Associated Press.

The missiles allegedly sold to Iran were unarmed. The United States accuses Iran of trying to develop a nuclear arms program — an allegation Tehran denies.

Iran does not operate long-range bombers but it is believed Tehran could adapt its Soviet-built Su-24 strike aircraft to launch the missile. The missile's range would put Israel and a number of other U.S. allies within reach.

China is a declared nuclear weapons state. In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry officials were not available for comment Friday.

Dutch man faces court in chemical weapons case

The Associated Press

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands — A Dutch businessman accused of complicity in a genocide for selling chemicals to Iraq in the 1980s knew that Saddam Hussein might use them as weapons, prosecutors said at his first public hearing Friday.

The case is seen as a landmark because it would be the first time a businessman has been prosecuted for war crimes by a national court.

Frans van Anraat, 62, was not required to enter a plea or make a statement at the pretrial hearing.

He has acknowledged that he sold chemicals to Saddam's regime, but said his actions were neither wrong nor illegal.

The chemicals dealer is said to have exported tons of chemicals between 1984 and 1988 that were turned into mustard and nerve gas, some of which was used in the 1988 attack on the Kurdish town of Halabja where more than 5,000 people died.



Iraqi Kurds protest Friday outside the trial of accused chemicals dealer Frans van Anraat at the District Court in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Prosecutor Fred Teeven said investigators had strong evidence that Van Anraat calmly went ahead with delivering such materials even after the gas attack on Halabja, the Dutch broadcaster NOS reported.

Several dozen expatriate Iraqi Kurds came to watch the proceedings, some carrying photographs of family members killed.

EU seeks to sharpen its emergency military response

BY PAUL AMES

The Associated Press

LUXEMBOURG — European Union defense ministers opened talks Friday aiming to halve the time it takes to send elite battlegroups to international trouble spots.

EU officials want to secure backing from ministers to ensure that the 1,500-strong rapid-response units which the EU is setting up to snuff out potential crises can be ready to deploy within five days of the bloc deciding to launch a mission.

The previous target was 10 days. The EU agreed in November to set up 13 such battlegroups by 2007 as a key compo-

nent of the bloc's drive to build up an effective military wing. The first such unit, led by Britain, is already primed for EU missions.

"It's important ... that we continue the work on European defense and in particular building capabilities," British Defense Secretary Geoffrey Hoon told reporters ahead of the meeting.

The ministers also will look at how to better coordinate the EU's military response to natural disasters in the light of the Asian tsunami disaster. EU officials were impressed by the rapid ability of U.S. military units to deploy to areas around the Indian Ocean hit by the waves.

Ministers will have a preliminary discussion on how Europe can more rapidly mobilize military resources to support civilian aid efforts in disaster areas.

New EU nations in eastern Europe are expected to press the bloc to consider a request from the Georgian government for the EU to help monitor Georgia's northern border with Russia.

Opposition from Moscow forced the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to end its six-year monitoring mission on the border. The Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania are leading calls for the EU to take over the mission,

but other EU members are reluctant — fearing that could antagonize Moscow and further inflame tensions in the Caucasus.

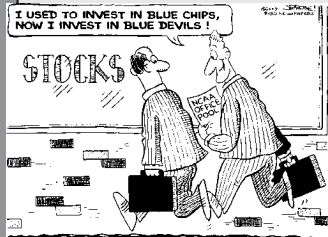
Officials said the EU would likely send two or three observers to Georgia around the end of this month to establish a presence in the country. They did not rule out sending a larger mission.

However, European diplomats expressed hope the Georgian and Russian governments could agree themselves on measures to reduce tensions on the border, perhaps at a summit meeting in May.

Russia claimed the around 100 OSCE observers failed to stop Chechen rebels operating along the border, and refused to renew the mission's mandate.

Looking at the news

A weekly sampling of U.S. editorial cartoons



JOHN ROSE/Scripta Howard



DICK LOCHNER/ Tribune Media Services



KEVIN KALLAUGH/ Cartoonists & Writers Syndicate



PAT OLIPHANT/ Universal Press Syndicate



GLENN MCCOY/ Universal Press Syndicate

Report: Groups plan underwater attacks

Philippine military details terrorist's scuba training

BY JIM GOMEZ
The Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Two of the most dangerous al-Qaida-linked groups in Southeast Asia are working together to train militants in scuba diving for seaborne target attacks, according to the interrogation of a recently captured guerrilla.

The ominous development is outlined in a Philippine military report obtained Thursday by The Associated Press that also notes increasing collaboration among the Muslim militants in other areas, including financing and explosives, as extremists plot new ways to strike.

In the past year, the Indonesia-based Jemaah Islamiyah has given Abu Sayyaf militants in the Philippines at least \$18,500 for explosives training, the report said.

The report comes a month after the U.S. Coast Guard announced it is seeking to better protect the na-

tional ports from terrorist attacks by scuba divers by developing a sonar system that can distinguish human swimmers from dolphins.

Concerns about terrorist strikes by scuba divers were raised three years ago after the FBI announced it was investigating whether al-Qaida operatives took scuba training to help blow up ships at anchor, power plants, bridges, depots or other waterfront targets.

Authorities fear scuba divers could target ships with more accuracy than a small explosive-laden boat like the one used in the USS Cole blast that killed 17 sailors in 2000 in Yemen.

According to the Philippine report, an Abu Sayyaf suspect in a deadly bus bombing in Manila on Feb. 14 — Gamal Baharan — described how he and other seasoned guerrillas took scuba diving lessons as part of a plot for an attack at sea.

Abu Sayyaf leaders Khaddafy

Janjalani and Abu Sulaiman initiated the training, Baharan said, adding that Janjalani claimed to speak directly with al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden via satellite phone.

Authorities couldn't verify any such conversations and said Janjalani may have been boasting, according to Philippine military officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Baharan, 35, said he was told in October to undergo the scuba training in southwestern Palawan province, where he periodically received cell phone messages from Janjalani and Sulaiman "asking him how many fathoms he would be able to dive," the report said.

The training was in preparation for a Jemaah Islamiyah bombing plot on unspecified targets outside the Philippines that require "underwater operation," Baharan is quoted as saying.

Jemaah Islamiyah has been blamed for a string of attacks in



A military policeman guards a bombing suspect Gamal Baharan at the Armed Forces headquarters north of Manila on Feb. 22. According to a Philippine military report, Baharan, an Abu Sayyaf suspect in a deadly bus bombing in Manila on Feb. 14, described how he and other guerrillas took scuba diving lessons as part of a plot for an attack at sea.

AP

Southeast Asia starting in 1999. Major strikes include the Aug. 5, 2003, bombing of the J.W. Marriott hotel in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, which killed 12 people, and the Oct. 12, 2002, bombings on Bali island that killed 202,

mostly foreign tourists.

Abu Sayyaf is known more for its kidnap-for-ransom schemes — including many involving Americans and Western tourists — and conducting deadly raids against Christian towns.



AP

Alessandra Mussolini, granddaughter of Italy's fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini, gives the last touches to an election poster on her camper in Rome. Mussolini began a hunger strike in the camper on Monday to protest a court decision blocking her party from running in a regional election. An appeals court upheld the ruling Friday.

Court won't allow Mussolini's granddaughter to run for office

BY AIDAN LEWIS
The Associated Press

ROME — An appeals court Friday upheld a ruling excluding Alessandra Mussolini, granddaughter of Italy's Fascist dictator, from running in a regional election next month.

The flamboyant politician had been protesting an earlier decision to keep her off the ballot with a hunger strike involving a daily diet of three cappuccinos.

When informed of the decision, Mussolini threw her cell phone against the camper van outside the court where she has been living since beginning the hunger strike on Monday, the news agency ANSA reported.

Mussolini said that she would make another appeal before leaving the site in a car, private Sky TG24 reported.

Mussolini, a deputy in the European Parliament, has been blocked from running in the Lazio region's ballot because of the alleged presence of hundreds of bogus voter signatures on the list of her

party, Social Alternative. Each party has to submit at least 3,500 signatures of registered voters to run for election in Lazio.

Mussolini has accused right-wing incumbent Francesco Storace, of the National Alliance party, of instigating the investigation that led to her exclusion.

Two years ago, Mussolini left the National Alliance, part of Italy's center-right governing coalition, to start her own movement. She complained that National Alliance leader Gianfranco Fini had renounced the party's allegiance to Italy's Fascist past.

If allowed to run in the April 3 ballot, Mussolini could take a crucial 2 percent or 3 percent of the right-wing vote from Storace.

The case has sparked investigations into the possible presence of false signatures on party lists across the country before elections in 14 of Italy's 20 regions. In Rome, the Interior Ministry announced Thursday that it was sending inspectors to registry offices to investigate the case.

EU: Microsoft antitrust remedies aren't working

BY RAF CASERT
The Associated Press

BRUSSELS, Belgium — Microsoft Corp.'s pledge to cooperate with last year's landmark European Union ruling against it "doesn't seem to be working at all" and "could result in more fines, an EU official said Friday.

After hearing from Microsoft's competitors, the EU's antitrust office found that the system the company had set up to improve the interoperability between its Windows server and other software companies was insufficient.

"Based on the market tests, it doesn't seem to be working at all," said EU spokesman Jonathan Todd.

EU antitrust regulators fined Microsoft a record \$665 million when they ruled last March that Microsoft abusively wielded its Windows software monopoly and locked competitors out of the market.

It ordered remedies to give rivals better access to Windows technological information, but it now says Microsoft is dragging its feet.

To say it was difficult for competitors to have access to the technical information

needed to make a judgment whether to buy a license for it.

He also said that Microsoft forced the rivals to buy the full license package and did not allow companies to pick and choose what they needed. And the Commission felt the cost for the license was excessive.

The Commission can inflict additional punishment if necessary and fines against Microsoft could reach as high as 5 percent of daily sales.

Microsoft has always said it was doing its utmost to comply with the EU ruling. Spokesman Jim Desler confirmed that the company had received feedback from the European Commission about its plans for licensing certain software blueprints. But he would not say what specific changes regulators had asked for.

Desler said Microsoft was "grateful to receive the feedback because it allows us to respond promptly and in an appropriate way."

The EU ruling also forces the company to offer an alternative Windows version for sale without its video and music Media Player application.

France's criticism did not address that issue, Todd said.

Landslide missing feared dead

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkish authorities on Friday listed 15 people as missing and presumed dead, a day after a landslide buried more than 20 homes in central Turkey.

Rivers of brown mud still flowing down the snow-covered hills prevented rescuers from digging through the 49-foot thick mud to reach those buried in the village of Suzgu.

"There is no hope of finding survivors any more, it would be a miracle," said Ali Ihsan Yener, an official in the town of Koyulhisar, some 12 miles from Suzgu.

Authorities had listed 16 people as missing on Thursday but Yener said one person was found alive elsewhere.

'No' in France EU referendum?

PARIS — Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin said Friday that he is "preoccupied" but not worried by a poll that, for the first time, suggests the "no" vote could win in France's May referendum on the EU constitution.

"This hypothesis doesn't sadden me. It preoccupies me but doesn't worry me," Raffarin said.

A poll by the CSA firm suggested that the majority of France could vote against the EU Constitution in the May 29 referendum.

Still, recent polls have mostly shown solid support in the "yes" camp although suggesting rising momentum among opponents.

From The Associated Press



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Toll-road blues

NH MERRIMACK — Local motorists are disappointed that the discount tokens they use to pay ramp tolls at three exits in town are one step closer to being eliminated.

"The town of Merrimack is very disappointed that the House saw fit to eliminate the token and discount," Selectmen Chairman Dick Hinch said.

Merrimack motorists must pay 50-cent tolls at Exit 10, 11 and 12 of the Everett Turnpike. Eliminating the tokens is part of the plan to implement E-Z Pass in New Hampshire.

"There has to be some consideration given to the residents of Merrimack ... You pay to get out and you pay to get in. There is no other town in the state like it," Hinch said, calling the ramp tolls "unfair."

The legislation passed by the House would eliminate the high-way tokens, which provide a 50 percent discount. The measure must be passed by the Senate and signed by the governor to take effect.

Schools scan visitors

TX HOUSTON — More than 400 schools in 14 districts in the Houston area have gone high-tech when it comes to identifying and keeping track of campus visitors.

The new system, called V-soft — or visitor, student or faculty tracking — is a Web-based software program that can flag visitors who are known sex offenders. The system also keeps a log of when visitors arrive and leave campus, and alerts school officials to people who should not be on campus.

The computer software gets visitors' personal information by scanning their driver's license or state ID card. This information is checked against the Texas Department of Public Safety's database for registered sex offenders.

Sky-high deck to reopen

NY NEW YORK — A 70-story-high observation deck at Rockefeller Center will reopen this fall after a \$75 million renovation, the complex's co-owner said.

The deck, atop 30 Rockefeller Center, has been closed since 1986, when the Rainbow Room restaurant expanded into its space. It is expected to draw about 2 million visitors a year, according to Tishman Speyer Properties, co-owners of Rockefeller Center.

Views from the open-air deck will encompass most of the city, including Central Park and the skyscrapers of midtown and lower Manhattan.

At 850 feet above street level, it will be the city's second-highest observatory (the highest is atop the Empire State Building, which is about 200 feet higher).

Smoking ban advances

NJ TRENTON — Gamblers would not be allowed to



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

smoke on Atlantic City casino floors or inside fraternal organizations under a measure passed by a New Jersey Senate committee.

Lawmakers voted 7-0 for the measure, which also covers restaurants, bars and offices.

Representatives from the Casino Association of New Jersey said a ban would drive away gamblers and harm the state's economy.

If the ban in New Jersey is passed, the state would join New York, Massachusetts, California and a handful of others that prohibit smoking in indoor public places.

Goat keeper charged

WV CHARLESTON — A man who allegedly left a trail of dead goats through several states has lost custody of his 200-plus remaining animals pending the outcome of animal cruelty cases in Ohio and West Virginia.

Christopher Weathersbee, 64, fled to West Virginia with 16 of his goats, including a dead one he'd been storing in a freezer, in late February amid an impoundment and seizure by agents in Scioto County, Ohio.

Ohio agents found an estimated 80 goat carcasses on his rented property — including one in the house and another nine in a freezer, according to Teresa Landon, director of the Ohio Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.



Reaching new height

Dewan Commodore, a Middletown High School senior, clears a strap used for the bar as he practices his high-jump technique during the second week of spring training at the school in Middletown, Ohio.

Weathersbee told officials he does not bury dead animals right away to allow the "spirit to pass," Landon said.

Shrimp is big find

ID BOISE — Biologists with the Idaho National Guard have discovered a new species of fairy shrimp living in the off-dry lake beds of Idaho's desert.

Though they look delicate enough to match their name, they are strong enough to survive, unhatched, for years in the baking heat of summer and the frozen tundra of winter until enough rain falls and the pools return. Once they awaken they live a few frenzied weeks, mating and leaving behind tiny cystlike offspring, then die.

"This is a large, predatory fairy shrimp. This guy is about 3 inches long. That is huge for a fairy shrimp," biologist Dana Quinney said Tuesday during a news conference announcing the discovery.

Ex-dead man on mend

NC LOUISBURG — A man who was hit by a car and mistakenly declared dead is out of the hospital and continuing his recovery in a rehabilitation center, relatives said.

Larry Green was hit by a car the night of Jan. 24 as he walked home after buying beer.

Green, 29, was examined on the scene by paramedics and a medical examiner, declared dead and his body taken to a morgue. There, 2½ hours after the accident, the same medical examiner detected signs of life. He was hospitalized.

Green suffered a severe head injury, broken leg and is paralyzed.

Two of the four paramedics who treated Green were fired and their credentials suspended, though the credential of one has been reinstated pending an administrative hearing. The other two were ordered to take remedial training. The medical examiner was not disciplined.

Abortion ban on hold

MI LANSING — A new state law that bans a procedure critics call partial-birth abortion will not take effect this month so that the state has more time to respond to a federal lawsuit challenging the statute.

Under an agreement reached by Attorney General Mike Cox and three groups that filed suit, the abortion law was put on hold until June 15. It was scheduled to take effect March 30.

Cox spokeswoman Allison Pierce said the state needed more time to respond to the suit, which was filed March 1.

The American Civil Liberties Union, the Center for Reproductive Rights and Planned Parenthood Federation of America argue the law is unconstitutional because it could be interpreted as a ban on all abortions and does not allow exceptions for when a mother's life or health are in danger.



Just skijoring

Emma, as they go skijoring down a road in Maple, Wis.

Patty St. Onge gets a pull from her 20-month-old American water spaniel, Emma, as they go skijoring down a road in Maple, Wis.



Tulips are bloomin'

Kansas City.

A tulip tree blooms brightly along 44th Street at Warwick Blvd in Kansas City.



Hut of sand
Andy Briggs of Victoria, British Columbia, a sand artist with Sand Sculpture Company of Chicago, works on fine-tuning a beach hut made with 60 tons of riverbed sand on the exhibit floor at the Flower, Lawn & Garden Show in Kansas City, Mo.



Get your frozen fish
Jeff Kissinger pulls up a perch while ice fishing on Erie Canal Lock 2 in Waterford, N.Y.



Statuesque scene
A Keene State College student walks past a sculpture by Rob Loreson titled "Aurora" on the school's campus in Keene, N.H.



Gimme a kiss
Three-month-old calves lick milk from each other's faces on the Klodt Dairy Farm in Ottumwa, Iowa.

Photos just for fun

MN ST. PAUL — State Rep. Tom Rukavina urged Gov. Tim Pawlenty to remove from his official Web site a "Pawnty Family Photo Album" containing 21 pictures of a pretty darn cute young future governor.

"I was a cute little baby, too," said Rukavina.

Rukavina contends that childhood pictures, which he views as designed to make folks feel warmer toward the governor, are a "totally inappropriate" form of self-promotion when posted on a taxpayer-financed Web site.

Pawlenty removed the pictures and playfully chided Rukavina for engaging in a trivial pursuit.

Lockdown unsuccessful

MD JESSUP — An inmate was stabbed with a shank hours after authorities lifted a monthlong prison lockdown that was imposed during an intensive search for such homemade weapons.

The attacker had fashioned his weapon from a piece of metal in a light fixture, said Capt. Priscilla Doggett, spokeswoman for the Maryland Division of Correction.

She said the victim was treated for a non-life-threatening wound he suffered in the attack. Both men are serving life sentences for homicides.

Fight for job ends

KY LOUISVILLE — A former police officer fired after shooting a teenager during an undercover drug buy dropped his bid to return to the police force and will receive \$59,500 in back pay, city officials said.

A statement from the mayor's office said McKenzie Mattingly ended his appeals in a six-month effort to recover his job.

Mattingly, a detective, fatally shot Michael Newby, 19, in January 2004 in an undercover drug buy gone awry.

Mattingly was indicted for murder but was acquitted of all charges related to Newby's death in a trial in September. He was fired last April by Chief Robert White, who said Mattingly violated department policy.

Pre-funeral fund-raiser

NH HAMPTON — Former state lawmaker Jane Kelley, who is diagnosed with terminal cancer, threw herself a "pre-funeral" party where guests were asked to donate \$25 to her cremation fund.

In exchange, they were excused from attending the wake, funeral and sending flowers when she dies.

A long wait for justice

TX HOUSTON — Months after his release from prison, a man who served nearly two decades behind bars is still waiting to find out if the evidence that questioned his guilt in a brutal crime will be enough to keep him free.

Prosecutors have asked the Court of Criminal Appeals to allow them to retry 44-year-old George Rodriguez in the kidnapping and

rape of a 14-year-old girl, for which he was convicted in 1987.

Rodriguez was serving a 60-year sentence for the crime when DNA tests showed blood and hair at the crime scene may have come from another man who was not prosecuted in the case.

Rodriguez was released in October because of faulty work and testimony in his case by the Houston Police Department's crime lab analysts.

Loggers back at work

OR GRANTS PASS — Loggers went to work Monday without interference at the site of a 2002 forest fire, felling old-growth trees after the U.S. Forest Service closed off the area to keep out protesters.

Citing safety concerns for loggers and protesters alike, officials in the Siskiyou National Forest on Monday closed the 700-acre area and roads leading to the timber sale. Protesters had impeded loggers going to work.

Forest Service spokesman Tom Lavagnino said a crew of loggers had no trouble getting to work, and rangers had not spotted a tree sitter who logging opponents said was in a fir tree.

Consolidation plan

IO DES MOINES — Lawmakers unveiled a six-year plan requiring Iowa's 99 counties and 950 cities to consolidate government services and separate into regions. The goal is to reduce duplication of government services and lower property taxes.

Suicide or murder?

CO DENVER — Authorities have arrested a 14-year-old girl on suspicion of manslaughter while they investigate her story that she helped her father commit suicide.

The girl said her 56-year-old father, a self-employed electrician, tried to fatally shoot himself and was near death when she found him, allegedly prompting her to "end his suffering." Boulder County sheriff's Lt. Phil West said.

Investigators were trying to determine if the man indeed tried to kill himself, he said.

Inconsistencies in the girl's story and their initial investigation — including the absence of a suicide note — led them to arrest the teenager.

Oyster restocking

VA BURGESS — Work has begun on what will be the largest restocking effort with disease-resistant shellfish in the Chesapeake Bay.

Officials think their latest idea may hold the key to restoring the ecologically and economically important bivalve.

"We're very optimistic," said Doug Martin, project coordinator for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Last week, Martin hosted a boat tour of the oyster grounds as an initial 339,000 specially bred native oysters were dumped into the river. Plans call for releasing a total of 15 million oysters by the end of next month.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES

Shaq on Wheaties box

Shaquille O'Neal's taste in breakfast cereals might be changing.

The longtime fan of Frosted Flakes, which he once called "the best cereal ever created," is the latest athlete to grace the cover of a Wheaties box.

The Shaq box, which features a picture of the 12-time NBA All-Star in a red Miami Heat uniform on the front, hit supermarket shelves this week.

"Sexy man, sexy man,"

O'Neal said Wednesday, after unveiling a 7-foot replica of the box.

Since 1934, hundreds of athletes have appeared on the Wheaties box, starting with Jack Armstrong — the fictitious All-American boy.

"It's actually an honor," O'Neal said. "I remember as a youngster, going to the stores, seeing all those greats like Kareem and Magic on the box and then saying to my mother and father, 'I'm going to be on the cover of that one day.' And then they'd smack me and say, 'Shut up.' But he made it.



O'Neal

Let's go, mambo!

Billy Dee Williams, Esai Morales, Latin Grammy winner Albita and Justina Machado will star in "The Mambo Kings," a new Broadway musical about two Cuban brothers and their journey from 1950s Havana to the posh nightclubs of Manhattan.

The musical opens Aug. 18 at the Broadway Theatre. The show is based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love" by Oscar Hijuelos, who co-wrote the book of the musical with Arne Glimcher. The score was written by Carlos Franzetti (music) and Glimcher (lyrics).

Williams

My old Kentucky stars

The official induction ceremony isn't for nearly a year, but the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame and Museum has named nine 2006 inductees, including Naomi and Wynonna Judd.

The announcement Wednesday started a year of promotions leading to the official ceremony scheduled for Feb. 23, 2006, in Lexington.

Next year's class includes various music genres ranging from jazz to gospel.

Induction ceremonies are held every two years.

The class of 2006 also includes Lionel Hampton, Mary Travers, Dottie Rambo, Sam Bush, John Conlee, Todd Duncan and John Jacob Niles.

Photos and stories from The Associated Press



The four men who make up Lonestar — Ritchie McDonald, Dean Sams, Michael Britt and Keech Rainwater — arrive at the 38th annual Country Music Awards, held last November at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tenn. They're back in the studio, planning for their next project.

They're already there... so now which way?

The guys of Lonestar will keep doing what works

BY JOHN HAYES
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Where do you go when you get to the end of your dreams?

After cashing in on two successful albums and lucrative road tours, the Dixie Chicks stopped playing the Nashville game, recorded an unconventional CD that broke all the rules, flew their career into the stratosphere, willingly squandered it on a political statement, started families and continue to live lives of the rich and famous.

One of the hottest recording and touring acts in history, Kenny Chesney moved out of Tennessee, hung a hammock in Margaritaville, squeezed a lime into his beer and wrote the most revealing, personal and non-commercial album of his career.

With 10 No. 1 country hits and gold or platinum wall-hangers for every one of their six non-holiday albums, the guys from Lonestar could easily break the mold and pursue personal musical interests with no fear of industry rejection.

Now back in the studio, preparing for their next project, what are their plans? "We're definitely hoping [the next CD] will take off," says guitarist Michael Britt. "We've seen the bar pretty high for ourselves. One of our albums sold 3 million, so that's the benchmark."

Everybody handles success differently.

Britt, keyboardist Dean Sams, singer Ritchie McDonald and drummer Keech Rainwater see their popularity as a message from their fans that they're doing something right. With every opportunity available to them, they choose to keep doing what they do.

"I think the record label, it's their job to

"We've always felt, don't do things that pigeonhole us, don't try to find songs like the last one, try to find something different, keep proving that we're diverse. But keep doing what works."

Michael Britt
Lonestar guitarist

sell the record," says Britt, on the phone from his home in Nashville. "They only look at that side of it. We have the luxury of looking at our whole career."

"There's no pressure for us. In the middle of making this record, we want to make a record that we're proud of."

Lonestar has come to understand the meth-

od behind the madness that has so far sold 8 million albums. Country radio's overwhelmingly female audience likes the band's diverse, upbeat and catchy tunes, and they think McDonald is cute.

"Love songs, rocking stuff and the family theme," says Britt. "That's what works for us."

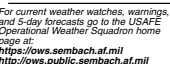
"Mr. Mom," a bouncy, cuddly tune about daddy day care written by Ron Harbin and Don Pfimmer for last year's "Let's Be Us Again" CD, became the perfect Lonestar song.

"When we were playing fairs last summer, we were a little hesitant about playing that song," Britt says.

"We thought maybe that only people with kids would get into it. But there were high-school kids singing along. That song kind of evolved live, with the crowd singing every word so loud we'd just stop playing and let them all sing along."

As the band pulls together songs for its next CD — some found, some written by band members — Britt says they're not looking for the next "Mr. Mom," just something that works every bit as well.

"There's a reflective period [after an album is released] where we think about what worked, what we want to do next and how we can do what we've never done," he says. "We've always felt, don't do things that pigeonhole us, don't try to find songs like the last one, try to find something different, keep proving that we're diverse. But keep doing what works."



Horoscope

Mercury goes retrograde in Aries. In the weeks to come, it may feel like you and your loved ones have revisited the tower of Babel all of a sudden, no one is speaking the same language, and instead, everyone is uttering strange, unassociated sounds. It's not always necessary to understand. Listen as though to music.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(March 19). It's a trans-forming year. Your days will be filled with activities very different from the ones that occupied you last year. Let a trusted partner lead the way this month. Your self-confidence soars because you're proud of the hard work you do in June. An inheritance or legacy helps your financial picture in August. Lucky love signs are Scorpio and Cancer.

ARIES (March 21-April 19).

Like the producer of reality TV competition, you don't always make the decision that's fair. Sometimes, you let kooky people stay in the game because they are more entertaining than the talented ones.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20).

Today is a study in how it feels to want. Your appetite (for all things, not only food) is voracious. To avoid sinking into a rank mood, bring a snack for the voyage. Love with a Libra is tender.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). If you have not set your sites high enough, you realize this now. Many of you experience a bout of jealousy. Have no fear. This is the way the universe has chosen to show you your heart's desire.

CANCER (June 22-July 22).

Don't complain; don't explain. Do talk plainly about what you intend to do, as this solidifies your approach. Romance brews in the neighborhood — it's a situation worthy of "Desperate Housewives."

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22).

The rules of the past no longer guide you to the most appropriate course of

action. So it's time to make new rules. Don't be hasty. Observe what's really going on before you make a single decision.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).

Life only asks you to do your best, not the impossible. Good fortune comes via a jewel-fingered lady. If you're kind and grateful, the future holds more of this for you.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).

Regarding a situation that a more judicious person would deem hopeless: There's still time to turn things around. Sort out the supporters from the

hangers-on. You have the ability to warm up even an icy-cold people tonight!

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21).

Your greatest investment is in yourself. Doing for others until you are all tapped out just isn't healthy. Set some time aside to focus inward. Someone is afraid of your criticism and thus keeps a low profile.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).

Be a social animal; networking now does wonders for your finances. However, knowing your real friends is key. A true friend accentuates your good characteristics, which can help you get work or a special date.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).

Social niceties are all well and good, but you're in a "show me the money" kind of mood. Or, as Dorothy Parker put it so well, "The two most beautiful words in the English language are 'check enclosed.'"

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).

It may come to your attention that late fees and penalties have reared their ugly heads into your financial picture. Resolve, on paper, to spend wisely. Careless spending will leave you in a state of constant need.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20).

Instead of vacillating, make decisions, and go with them. It turns out there is no right or wrong, only action and inaction. Your love life thrives when you take risks — especially if a Scorpio is involved.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Maths



Calvin and Hobbes

Jump Start

Zits

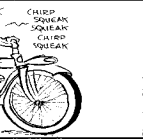
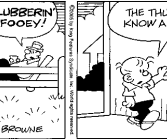
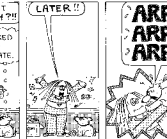
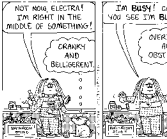
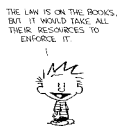
Cathy

Hi and Lois

Beetle Bailey

Red Rover

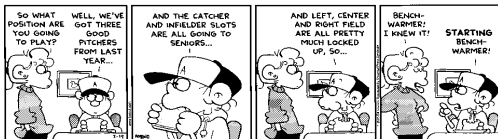
Better or Worse



Peanuts



Fox Trot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



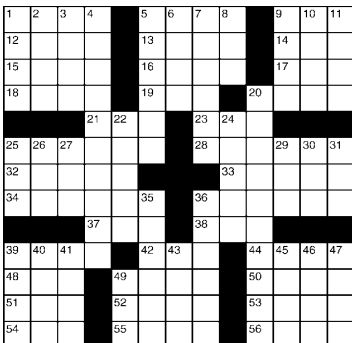
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Hand-warmer
- 5 Arthur of tennis
- 9 Honest politician
- 12 Be an 18-Across
- 13 Leeway
- 14 Put the kibosh on
- 15 Entreaty
- 16 Unruly crowds
- 17 Skater Babilonia
- 18 Lascivious looker
- 19 Compton
- 20 Boxer's weapon
- 21 Craze
- 23 Praise in verse
- 25 Bicycle-seat style
- 28 Form in droplets
- 32 Remark of regret
- 33 Overy reveille
- 34 Iota
- 36 Customer
- 37 "— the ramports ..."
- 38 Follower (Suff.)
- 39 "Lion King" villain
- 42 Trinity member
- 44 Coasted
- 46 Scepter topper
- 49 Macadamize
- 50 Relaxation
- 51 Costa del —
- 52 Particular
- 53 Succotash bean
- 54 Have bills
- 55 Pound of poetry
- 56 Barney's pal

Down

- 1 Look dejected
- 2 Unattractive
- 3 Take a hike
- 4 Joe Rogan's show
- 5 Fleet
- 6 Any
- 7 Rub elbows (with)
- 8 Type measures
- 9 Con
- 10 Prejudice
- 11 Labyrinth goal
- 20 End of an FDR quote
- 22 Bracelet site
- 24 Hands
- 25 Home-run hitter?
- 26 Will Smith biopic
- 27 Singer Cole
- 29 Trivial Pursuit need
- 30 Sailors' org.
- 31 Favorite
- 35 Lesser substitute
- 36 Movie industry
- 39 Medicine
- 40 "All I Wanna Do" singer Sheryl
- 41 Competent
- 43 "Awaiting reply"
- 45 Hideaway
- 46 "Woe—" of bounds
- 47 Out of bounds
- 49 Chart format

Answer to Previous Puzzle



3-19

CRYPTOQUIP

NG KPNPHLOMP OI W AGRI
XRWCPH OD HPWRRC
AGGK, O DTXXGDP NFP
XHGGI OD OM NFP
XTNNOMA
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A WITCH WERE TRAVELING VERY FAST, DO YOU SUPPOSE SHE MIGHT BE ON A SONIC BROOM?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: N equals T

Excerpts from Thursday's hearing on steroids in Major League Baseball:



"I have never taken illegal performance-enhancing drugs. I have never injected myself or had anyone inject me with anything. I have never broken the laws of the United States or the laws of the Dominican Republic. I have been tested as recently as 2004 and I am clean." — Sammy Sosa of the Baltimore Orioles. His lawyer read his prepared testimony.



"Like I said before, I've never taken it. So if you want to play under the rules of the Olympics, I welcome it." — Rafael Palmeiro of the Baltimore Orioles, asked if stricter drug testing rules, such as those for Olympic athletes, should extend to baseball.



"What I'm hearing is that I'm the only person in the major leagues who used steroids." — Jose Canseco, who has acknowledged using steroids during a career in which he hit 462 home runs. He also wrote a best-selling book in which he alleged Mark McGwire and other major leaguers used steroids.



"The allegations made in that book, the attempts to smear the names of players both past and present, having been made by one who for years vehemently denied steroid use, should be seen for what they are: an attempt to make money at the expense of others." — Boston Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling, referring to Canseco's book.



"So that there is no misunderstanding from my perspective, I will suspend any player who tests positive for an illegal steroid. There will be no exceptions. The (players) union is aware of that and they accept it." — Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig.

McGwire evasive on questions about steroids

First player to hit 70 homers in season refuses to 'name names'; others issue denials

BY HOWARD FENDRICH AND RONALD BLUM

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a room filled with humbled heroes, Mark McGwire hemmed and hawed the most.

His voice choked with emotion, his eyes nearly filled with tears, time after time he refused to answer the question everyone wanted to know: Did he take illegal steroids when he hit a then-record 70 home runs in 1998 — or at any other time?

Asked by Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., whether he was asserting his Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate himself, McGwire said: "I'm not here to talk about the past. I'm here to be positive about this subject."

Asked whether use of steroids was cheating, McGwire said: "That's not for me to determine."

To a couple of other questions, all he would say is: "I'm retired."

The dark clouds over baseball rained on Big Mac, whose powerful bat once captivated the nation.

"I know that he was in anguish yesterday just being there," baseball Commissioner Bud Selig said Friday on NBC's "Today" show. "Everybody has to do what they have to do. The other players were very outspoken."

McGwire was just part of Thursday's show at the House Government Reform committee's hearing on steroids in baseball, when lawmakers repeated threatened federal legislation to govern drug testing in not just baseball, but perhaps all U.S. sports.

Five current and former players, three of them among the 10 leading home run hitters in history, found themselves sitting biceps-to-biceps on Capitol Hill instead of a baseball field, wearing business suits instead of uniforms, forced by subpoena to testify before Congress about whether they cheated by using steroids.

Heads turned, strobes flashed and necks craned to get a glimpse of them on a day of extraordinary theater. The players bemoaned steroids as a problem for their sport but denied the drugs are widely used.

Jose Canseco, whose best-selling book, "Juiced," drew lawmakers' attention, said anew that he used performance-enhancing drugs as a player. Baltimore Orioles teammates Sammy Sosa and Rafael Palmeiro said they haven't.

McGwire in the past has denied using steroids but under oath repeatedly declined to respond directly. Peering at lawmakers over reading glasses, his goatee flecked with gray, McGwire was pressed to say whether he had taken performance-enhancing substances or whether he could provide details about use by other players. Over and over, he said he wouldn't respond.

All of the players offered condolences to the parents of two young baseball players who committed suicide after using steroids.

The parents testified, too, along with medical experts who testified about the health risks of steroids.

"Players that are guilty of taking steroids are not only cheaters — you are cowards," said Donald Hooton of



Mark McGwire, who broke Rogers Maris' season record of 61 home runs when he hit 70 in 1998, said "I'm not here to talk about the past. I'm here to be positive about this subject" during a hearing on Capitol Hill on Thursday.

Piano, Texas, whose son, Taylor, was 17 when he hanged himself in July 2003.

During a hearing that lasted 11½ hours, lawmakers questioned baseball's new drug-testing plan, including a provision allowing for fines instead of suspensions. A first offense could cost 10 days out of a six-month season, or perhaps a \$10,000 fine.

"That's the best we could do in collective bargaining," Selig said. "The penalties would be much tougher if I had my way."

He added that he would suspend anyone who fails a test, vowing: "There will be no exceptions."

Canseco's book included claims that he injected McG-

wire with steroids when they were teammates with the Oakland Athletics and that Palmeiro used the drugs. In a tense scene, they sat at the same table, never directly addressing each other. During a break, Canseco was left out while the other players huddled.

"Steroids were part of the game, and I don't think anyone really wanted to talk about it," Canseco said.

"If Congress does nothing about this issue, it will go on forever."

Several congressmen gushed about the sport, recalling how as children they collected baseball cards and autographs and looked up to players. For the most part, members of the committee appeared deferential and unwilling to press the players, saving their harshest criticism for baseball officials.

"Why should we believe that the baseball commissioner and the baseball union will want to do something when we have a 30-year record of them not responding to this problem?" asked Rep. Henry Waxman of California, the committee's ranking Democrat.

The paneled hearing room was full when the players appeared, with camera crews lining the walls and clogging the aisles. Much of the crowd cleared out when the players left, leaving empty seats for Selig's testimony.

He said the extent of steroids in baseball had been blown out of proportion.

"Did we have a major problem? No," Selig said. "Let me say this to you: There is no concrete evidence of that, there is no testing evidence, there is no other kind of evidence."

Questions about steroids have intensified as home runs have increased. McGwire and Sosa were widely credited with helping restore baseball's popularity in 1998 when they chased Roger Maris' season record of 61 homers. McGwire's mark lasted only three seasons before San Francisco's Barry Bonds hit 73.

Bonds and the New York Yankees' Jason Giambi were not called to the hearing. Both testified in 2003 to a grand jury investigating a steroid-distribution ring, and there were concerns testimony to Congress could hinder the probe.

Boston pitcher Curt Schilling, a vocal critic of steroid use, sat at one end of the witness table, with Canseco at the other. Palmeiro, Sosa and McGwire were in between.

Schilling took a shot at Canseco, saying claims in the former slugger's book "should be seen for what they are: an attempt to make money at the expense of others." He even called him a "liar."

But Schilling backtracked from his earlier claims of rampant steroid use, saying "the issue was grossly overstated by people, including myself."

While boosting strength, steroids also can lead to dramatic mood swings, heart disease, cancer, sterility and depression; using most steroids without a doctor's prescription for medical purposes has been illegal since 1991.

Baseball banned steroids in September 2002 and began testing for them with penalties in 2004. Several congressmen pointed out that other major U.S. sports leagues have stricter policies and suggested legislation might be needed to make the testing uniform.

Giambi works out, doesn't tune in testimony

The Associated Press

Jason Giambi lifted weights instead of watching his fellow players weather questions about steroids during Thursday's congressional hearing.

The New York Yankees slugger woke up at 10 a.m. — the same time testimony began in front of the House Government Reform Committee in Washington — and went straight to the gym at the team's facility in Tampa, Fla. "I haven't kept up with it," Giambi said. "I wanted to get my workout in."

Giambi testified in 2003 to a San Francisco grand jury investigating a steroid-distribution ring and was excused on Tuesday from making the trip to Washington. The San Francisco Chronicle reported in December that he acknowledged using steroids.

Yankees owner George Steinbrenner said he watched highlights of the hearings on the TV while having dinner.

Asked if it was a bad day for baseball, Steinbrenner said: "Not a good one so far."

San Diego pitcher Adam Eaton, the team's players representative, did watch and wasn't impressed with the legislators' questioning.

"I think now that everybody's had their say, to some degree, it sounds like everyone is spinning their wheels, just passing time," Eaton said. "There's nothing coming out of this other than the attention, obviously."

Jose Canseco, Mark McGwire, Steve Nolasco, Palmeiro and Curt Schilling were asked whether baseball should adopt

Spring training

two-year bans for first-time violations, similar to Olympic policy. "I think we're kind of jumping the gun a little bit on saying we should go to the extreme of the Olympic two-year ban," Eaton said. "Obviously if they get caught a second time it's a lifetime ban. We're in an entertaining business. The Olympics are put up on a pedestal of purity."

Nearly all of the spring training docket in Florida was rained out on Thursday. The unexpected downtime didn't entice other players to watch the hearings, though.

"I didn't have the TV on today," Yankees pitcher Mike Mussina said. "I don't know what's going to come out of it. Whether I watch it or I don't doesn't change what's happening there."

About 10 members of the Boston Red Sox were in their clubhouse when the hearing started and none were watching even though it was on the TV. Some were eating, others filling in NCAA brackets, others reading the newspaper.

At least one player used the day off to clubhouse. In a crowded New York Mets clubhouse, Mike Piazza — an avid viewer of C-SPAN — caught a few moments of the steroid hearings and said he was interested in watching future talks.

Piazza feels the issue is the "olive branch" between the players' union and management, and that hopes the negative attention doesn't tarnish the sport with fans.



Chicago Cubs pitcher Greg Maddux works against the Oakland Athletics on Thursday in Phoenix. Maddux won his first game of spring training.

"I hope what's not diminished is the perception of the skill it takes to hit a 95 mile-per-hour fastball or throw a no-hitter," he said.

In exhibition games:

Giants 7, Rangers 5: At Surprise, Ariz., Kenny Rogers, coming off a career-high 18 victories last season, gave up six runs and 10 hits in 3 1/3 innings for the Rangers. Rogers, who had pitched just once this spring, gave up a run in one inning when he started the opener March 3 against Kansas City.

Cubs 6, Athletics 4: At Phoenix, Greg Maddux picked up his first victory of the spring despite allowing four runs and seven hits with a walk and four strikeouts in five innings. Before the game, O'Connell manager Dusty Baker suggested Maddux is a strong possibility to start on Opening Day, with Mark Prior and Kerry Wood sidelined by injuries.

Padres 16, Rockies (ss) 7: At Peoria, Ariz., it was quite an afternoon for Ryan Klesko and Eric Young. Klesko looked like his former self, driving in six of San

Diego's first seven runs with two homers and a single.

Young, signed by the Padres as a free agent in December, got to play in the same game with his 19-year-old son, Eric Jr., a Rockledge, Fla., native, brought up specifically for this game to play second base against his father's team.

Royals 5, Angels 3: At Tempe, Ariz., Mike Sweeney had three hits and Emilio Brown drove in two runs to lead Kansas City past Los Angeles.

Brown and Eli Marrero had two hits apiece and Angel Berroa homered for Kansas City, which finished with 14 hits. Steve Finley had two hits and two RBIs for the Angels.

Diamondbacks (ss) 13, Brewers 10: At Tucson, Ariz., Alan Zinter hit a three-run homer in the bottom of the 10th inning for the Arizona split squad.

Troy Glauz was 2-for-3 with a double, homer and four RBIs. The Diamondbacks' new third baseman is 10-for-21 — a .476 average — with five extra-base hits and 12 RBIs in nine games.

The Diamondbacks finished with 19 hits, Milwaukee 17.

Diamondbacks (ss) 5, Rockies (ss) 3: At Tucson, Ariz., Chad Tracy had two hits and three RBIs and Michael Gossling pitched four scoreless innings to lead Arizona in a matchup of split-squad teams.

Devil Rays 7, Phillies 3: At Clearwater, Fla., Eduardo Perez hit a three-run homer and Jose Benito Rodriguez had three hits apiece for Tampa Bay.

McGwire faces questioning like fidgety Mafia don

WASHINGTON

This is the price of all those home runs: A hero shamed, diminished not just in size but in stature, reduced to answering questions from Congress like some fidgety Mafia don — and the game he once dominated unable to crawl out from even that shrunken shadow.

"I'm not going to talk about the past," Mark McGwire replied on at least eight occasions, usually when asked about some of the most revered accomplishments in a game that's held the nation in its thrall for more than 130 years.

Though only five players and a handful of MLB executives appeared before the House Government Reform Committee, make no mistake: All of baseball — even Barry Bonds, all the more respected by his absence — was called on the carpet.

Only one man, however, owned up.

"The most effective thing right now," former MVP and best-selling author Jose Canseco said, "is we've got to admit to certain things we've done. What this hearing is that I'm the only person in the major leagues who used steroids."

Jim Little



The hearings began with former star pitcher and current Sen. Jim Bunning saying, "maybe I'm old fashioned, but I remember when players didn't get better as they got older. We all

got worse." The day continued with the anguished stories of two families who lost sons to suicide because those kids believed the advice from coaches and scouts "to get bigger" meant by any means necessary, including the reckless use of steroids.

Then a few of those players who got bigger and better as they got older took the stage, and except for the disgraced but still not discredited Canseco, washed their hands of any responsibility.

The voices of McGwire and Canseco cracked when discussing the fates that befell young ballplayers Rod Garibaldi and Taylor Hooton. But it wasn't long before all of those who testified — again, with the exception of Canseco —

began repeating what has become baseball's mantra whenever questions about performance-enhancers arise. "I said Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling, who on Thursday backed off some of his most strident criticism of steroid users, 'am not going to dwell on the past.'"

That was essentially McGwire's answer to whether he considered the use of steroids "cheating."

And to the question of whether his magical 1998 home-run race with Sammy Sosa — the one Commissioner Bud Selig credits with sparking the renaissance of baseball after a crippling strike four years earlier — was played "with honor and integrity."

And to the question of whether he ever used any performance-enhancers beyond the steroid precursor androstenedione, which an Associated Press writer noticed sitting on the top shelf of his locker in 1998.

And even to the question of whether all the home-run records of recent years should be wiped off the books.

"I'm not here," McGwire kept answering, "to go into my past."

None of the other players, save

Canseco, were any more forthcoming. They saw no steroid use in the clubhouse, rarely discussed it and never leashed enough about any potential abusers to make confronting them worthwhile.

"It was as acceptable in the late '80s and the mid '90s as a cup of coffee," Canseco said.

Anybody who doubts that now should have spent a few hours in Room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building.

Rep. Henry Waxman recalled that he and Selig, then the owner of the Milwaukee Brewers, were likely the only two people in the room who could recall Congress' first investigation of what was called baseball's "alarming" drug problem in 1973. He then recited off a litany of failed chances that baseball failed to capitalize on ever since.

Fans in Boston chanting "steroids, steroids" when Canseco stepped to the plate at Fenway in 1988; former commissioner Fay Vincent's unilateral policy banning, among other drugs, steroids; a string of news reports; McGwire's andro admission; the arrest of a ballplayer with steroids in his car; and more.

"But as we know now from 30

years of history," Waxman said, "baseball failed to regulate itself."

The game's new drug policy, it said, is a product of pressure brought to bear in a previous congressional hearing chaired by Sen. John McCain, is full of loopholes. There are no tests for human growth hormones and anabolic steroids are not banned. But none of this apparently bothers fans — attendance is up across the board — and it hasn't cost baseball its special place in America's sporting life. Yet.

Not so with McGwire. The redhead whose lightning swing and 20-inch arms captivated us all shuffled out of the room at the end of the day, his accomplishments now as deflated as his once Bunyanesque frame. A few minutes earlier, a congressman had asked McGwire about a message he had for the half-million kids that medical experts believe have tried steroids trying to be like him just.

Just this once, McGwire didn't hesitate to answer.

"Steroids are wrong," he said. "Do not take them. They give you nothing but false hope."

Jim Little is a national sports columnist for The Associated Press. Write to him at: jllike@ap.org

All players mulling proposals

One plan links player costs to revenue, one does not

By IRA PODELL

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — After receiving a choice of two proposals from the NHL, the players' association went home to try to think of something better.

"We're going to do some brainstorming," union senior director Ted Saksin said.

The league and the union met for 2½ hours Thursday in New York, but only 20 minutes was spent together. It was then that the NHL presented two six-year offers, one that linked player costs to league revenues and one that didn't.

A source close to the negotiations told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity that the "de-linked" offer contained a

hard cap of \$37.5 million per team, \$42.5 million lower than commissioner Gary Bettman's final, nonnegotiable proposal made on Feb. 15 — the night before he called off the season.

The removal of linkage was what got the union to agree for the first time to accept a salary cap, but the sides are still nowhere near an agreeable number.

The other offer was more along the lines of what the league wants — a collective bargaining agreement with linkage to ensure "cost certainty" for its 30 clubs. In that proposal, players would be guaranteed 54 percent of league revenues, the source said.

Neither proposal really wowed the players' association.

When the players agreed to a salary cap last month, they count-

tered the league's offer of a hard cap of \$42.5 million with a soft cap of \$49 million.

"The proposals they made today were nothing new," Saksin told the AP. "It was basically a re-formulation — actually worse in content than ones we had previously rejected."

The NHL, however, did make some concessions. The new, non-linked offer included a minimum payroll of \$22.5 million and provided a mechanism to negotiate the cap upward if there was certain revenue success, the source said.

Both proposals included the players' offer of a 24 percent cutback on existing contracts. They also addressed issues such as the entry-level system, qualifying offers, salary arbitration, and free agency.

Giants sign wide receiver Burress

The Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Plaxico Burress didn't let an agent stand in the way of joining the New York Giants.

The free agent wide receiver officially joined the Giants on Friday, a week after rejecting an offer from the team. He then fired agent Michael Harrison and signed with Drew Rosenhaus, who renewed negotiations.

The contract was reached Thursday, and includes an \$8 million signing bonus, a football source told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The speedy former Pittsburgh Steelers receiver met with the Giants last week and turned down a deal similar to the one he agreed to Thursday, causing New York to pull the offer from the table.

But Burress liked the situation in New York enough to work out a deal. He now becomes Eli Manning's No. 1 receiver.

"Having the option to move around and be able to go in motion and create some one-on-one matchups, that's an opportunity that I've been waiting for," Burress said. "I believe I can go out and play at a level with some of the best receivers in this game."

Burress, 6-foot-5 and 226 pounds, will be an attractive target for Manning, who is heading into his first season as a starter.

Burress had 35 catches for 698 yards and five touchdowns last season, and is a proven deep threat.

Burress spent the last five seasons in Pittsburgh after the Steelers traded him from the Detroit team of Michigan State in 2000.

Eagles linemaker Adams deals to one-year deal

PHILADELPHIA — Linemaker Keith Adams agreed to a one-year contract Friday with the Eagles following a season in which his career-high linebacker helped Philadelphia reach the Super Bowl.

Adams also is a key player on special teams whose value rose after he played well as a starter filling in for Mark Simoneau in the playoffs.

Sports briefs

Steelers restructure contract, free up salary cap money

PITTSBURGH — The Pittsburgh Steelers restructured the contract of left tackle Marvel Smith on Friday to free up \$2.5 million in salary cap space.

Smith will be paid the minimum-wage base salary of \$540,000 in 2005 instead of the \$3.95 million in salary he had been due. The remaining \$3.4 million was paid to Smith this week as a signing bonus.

Over the last three years, Smith has been given \$11.1 million in bonus money while making the NFL minimum in salary each year.

Man pleads guilty to making threats in Bryant case

DENVER — A California man pleaded guilty Friday to threatening the prosecutor and the alleged victim in the rape case against Kobe Bryant.

Cedric Augustine, 38, of the Los Angeles area, could get up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Augustine pleaded guilty to making interstate threats. In exchange, federal prosecutors dropped two dozen other counts, including attempted extortion and threatening to use fire or explosives.

Augustine, who appeared to be crying at times, admitted that he called Eagle County District Attorney Mark Hurlbert in 2003 and threatened his life and that of the 20-year-old Colorado woman who accused the basketball star of rape.

The criminal charges against Bryant were dropped in September after the woman said she no longer wanted to go forward with the case. She and the Los Angeles Lakers star announced March 2 they had agreed to an undisclosed settlement in her civil suit against him.

Bryant denied assaulting the woman and said they had consensual sex.

Cardinals' Sanders sidelined indefinitely with appendicitis

JUPITER, Fla. — St. Louis Cardinals outfielder Reggie Sanders was sidelined indefinitely after being diagnosed with appendicitis Thursday.

The Cardinals said Sanders, 37, was scheduled to have an appendectomy later Thursday morning. The veteran outfielder reported to camp in the morning and complained of stomach pain. He was evaluated by the team's medical staff and diagnosed with acute appendicitis.

Sprinters Kenteris, Thanou cleared by Greek officials

ATHENS, Greece — Sprinters Kostas Kenteris and Katerina Thanou were cleared by Greek sports officials Friday of evading pre-Olympic drug tests.

The ruling by the Greek Athletics Federation came after two months of hearings into a scandal that deeply embarrassed the hosts of last summer's Athens Olympics. The sprinters had faced possible two-year bans if found guilty.

Their coach, Christos Tzekos, was blamed for the athletes' missed tests and was suspended for four years. He was cleared of separate accusations of distributing banned substances.

Costas Panagopolous, head of the five-member sports panel, said the sprinters were exonerated by a 4-1 vote.

Slutskaia leads in world short program

MOSCOW — Irina Slutskaya led the short program in figure skating's world championships Friday, finishing just ahead of Sasha Cohen despite a continuing heart ailment and the stress of performing before a home crowd.

Cohen finished less than three points behind Slutskaya. Carolina Kostner of Italy, who landed a triple-triple, was in third place heading into Saturday's final free program. Japan's Miki Ando was fourth after the short program and defending world champion Shizuka Arakawa of Japan was sixth.



Joe Ogilvie talks about his sand shot on the 18th hole during the Friday-first round of the Bay Hill Invitational in Orlando, Fla., on the rain-delayed 18th hole.

Ogilvie takes early lead in Bay Hill Invitational

The Associated Press

Golf roundup

ORLANDO, Fla. — Joe Ogilvie started in the rain and finished in the cold, a first round in the Bay Hill Invitational that took him more than 24 hours to complete but left him atop the leader board Friday morning.

Whether he stays there won't be determined until the other 60 players finish in the afternoon in a tournament that so far has featured odd weather and strange do-overs on the course.

Ogilvie, coming off a playoff loss at the Honda Classic, finished with a 4-under 68 and had a one-shot lead over Graeme McDowell of Northern Ireland among the early starters. Sergio Garcia, Kenny Perry and Mark Cavacchia were among those at 2-under 70.

Tiger Woods looked as if he might be among the leaders until his 8-foot birdie putt on the 13th hole caught the right edge of the cup and spun away. He was 3 under at the time and seemingly in control. But Woods had to make a 6-footer for par on the 18th to avoid a bogey-bogey-bogey finish. He wound up with a 71.

Ernie Els, joining Woods in the morning group at Bay Hill, was five shots behind him after an ugly bogey on the par-5 12th. He made up those five shots in five holes, but not before the South African was so disgusted with his putting that he flung his ball into the water on the 13th. He also shot 71.

U.S. Open champion Retief Goosen hit two balls out of bounds — one on Thursday, one on Friday — in his first round and wound up with a 78. Goosen was so sporadic that he didn't hit a par 5 in regulation until the last one. No. 16, and even then just barely.

His second shot started to roll into the water until it stopped in the wet grass.

The most bizarre moment belonged to Mark Hensley. He was 9 over for his round when he was hit by a rain shower. He was out of bounds on the 18th. Instead of reloading, he packed it in. The Aussie walked the rest of the hole.

With Andre Stolz and Mike Weir without hitting another shot, and was disqualified for not finishing the 18th hole.

The PGA Tour has been packed with great tournaments and quality winners, although weather is emerging as a theme every bit as prominent as Woods, Phil Mickelson and Vijay Singh dominating early.

When nearly 2 inches of rain fell Thursday afternoon that suspended the first round after just three hours, it marked the sixth tour event this year where a round was halted by weather.

Worse than the rain, temperatures were in the mid-40s when the early starters returned to resume the first round.

The lost time will lead to a long finish.

The 36-hole cut will not be made until Saturday afternoon.

Groupings for the final round will not be determined until late Sunday morning, and threesome will go off both tees the rest of the week.

Sorenstam one back in Safeway International

SUPERSTITION MOUNTAIN, Ariz. — Defending champion Annika Sorenstam shot a 6-under 66 on Thursday to finish a stroke behind first-round leaders Lorena Ochoa and Si-yeh-Ai Lim in the Safeway International, while Michelle Wie was in danger of missing the cut after a 73.

Sorenstam won her 57th LPGA Tour title two weeks ago weeks ago in Mexico in her season debut, her third straight victory dating to last year. The 15-year-old Wie is coming off a second-place tie in the season-opening SBS Open in Hawaii.

Julie Inkster matched Sorenstam at 66, Karen Stapples had a 67, and Soo-Yun Kang, Sung Ah Yim and Moira Dunn shot 68s. Paula Creamer, Beth Daniel, Candie Kung, Natalie Gulbis, Marrie Hart, Dawn Co-Jones, Karrie Webb and Kim Williams had 69s.

Orie Greene turns up when its tournament time

The Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Louisiana-Lafayette guard Orie Greene is making his fourth straight appearance in the NCAA tournament. More impressive is that he's done it with two schools.

Greene made his first two trips with Florida before transferring to the 13th-seeded Ragin' Cajuns, who play fourth-seeded Louisville on Friday night.

Coincidentally, Greene's old team also was sent to Nashville in the NCAA post system even though the Cajuns are in the Albuquerque Regional, while Florida is in the Syracuse Regional.

"Oh yeah, it's pretty ironic they (are) out here like that," Greene said.

Before transferring, Greene was Florida's Mr. Basketball at Gainesville High School, played in every game for the Gators as a freshman, and started in 30 games as a sophomore. He said he has changed since leaving Florida.

"I've grown a lot. I probably just worked on every aspect of my game and not just one or two parts, and I just go out there and try to win and play every game like it's my last," Greene said.

Greene broke his right leg at Kansas on Dec. 11 and missed six games, then returned to help the Cajuns win 14 of their last 17.

He planned to chat with some of his former teammates such as David Lee and Adrian Moss and even Florida coach Billy Donovan.

But Greene does have an agenda this time around with the Cajuns.

"We've been put out every time... hopefully I can go a little bit further this year," he said.

Some time away: A few months ago, Bucknell coach Pat Flannery was enjoying basketball so little that he needed some time off.

"We got to a point where it just wasn't as fun as it has supposed to be," Flannery said. "I wasn't communicating with my family and my kids... I just hit a wall, and when I did, I got the kind of help I needed."

Flannery still attended practices but took a few games off, received counseling for stress and came back feeling rejuvenated.

NCAA notes

"Basketball is not who I am, is what I found out," Flannery said. "It's what I do. And that wasn't the case before."

Flannery returned to lead Bucknell to a Patriot League tournament title and a berth in the NAACAs. The Bison, seeded 14th in the Syracuse Regional, play third-seeded Kansas in Oklahoma City on Friday night. The Bison had been on their way to an 11-game winning streak before Flannery stepped away, but players said his leave of absence made things better.

"We definitely noticed a change," guard Kevin Bettencourt said. "It's tough on your stretch to lose your head coach for any stretch of time. It was something he needed to do and we were here to support him. When he did get back, it did bring the team closer. It made other guys step up and be leaders, and since he has been back, we have jelled better as a team."

And now that his Bison are in the NCAA tournament, what's not to like? Flannery said he's happy again and making sure to enjoy the little things.

"I'm in a whole different spot," he said.

Left behind: Guard Billy Edelin, a key cog in Syracuse's run to the national championship two years ago, did not accompany the team to Worcester, Mass., for its first-round game against Vermont on Friday.

Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim acknowledged that Edelin did not make the trip but would not elaborate on his absence.

Edelin was declared ineligible by the NCAA for the fall semester because he did not meet academic eligibility requirements but was granted an academic waiver petition by the NCAA in October, making him immediately eligible to play.

Although Edelin did not practice before the season and sat out the first five games because of academics, he played in 20 games and has converted more than 50 percent of his shots (34-for-67).

However, he has not played in the Orange's last six games.



Minnesota coach Dan Monson, getting a pat on the head from Aaron Robinson, has weathered a stormy rebuilding process in getting the Gophers back into the NCAA tournament.

Edelin had been practicing with the team and was on the bench for all three of Syracuse's games in the Big East tournament in New York last week.

Job security: Dan Monson's job security at Minnesota was shaky at best this time last season.

Monson tuned out the critics and rumor mongers and led Minnesota into the NCAA tournament for the first time since 1999. The Gophers play Iowa State on Friday in Charlotte.

"For people to start getting off his back and start giving him a little credit is nice to see," forward Brent Lawson said.

Monson has not had an easy time in his six seasons at Minnesota. He took over as the school was reeling from an academic scandal. The scandal cost Minnesota scholarships and a reduction in recruiting priorities that made it difficult for Monson to rebuild.

He's finally done it this year.

Morgan's 21 spark UNLV win

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Ricky Morgan scored 21 points to lead UNLV past Arizona State 89-78 in the first round of the NIT on Thursday night.

Morgan had 15 points in the first half and was 6-for-9 from the field overall, including 3-for-3 from three-point range. He was averaging 3.4 points per game coming in the game.

The Rebels (17-13) advanced to play at South Carolina in the second round Tuesday night.

De Diogu had 29 points and 11 rebounds in what may have been his last game for the Sun Devils (18-14). The junior power forward could be an NBA first-round draft pick this year if he decides to skip his senior season.

Diogu was 10-for-16 from the field and 8-for-11 from the free throw line.

Ordary Blankson had 19 points for the Rebels and Jerry Blasingame and Michael Umeu each added 11.

UNLV shot 59 percent from the floor (34-for-58), including 11-for-22 from three-point range.

Arizona State made 45 percent of its shots.

UNLV, which led just about the entire game, built its biggest lead of the first half at 30-21. The Sun Devils then went on an 8-0 run, but the Rebels pulled away late in the half and led 48-40 at intermission.

The Sun Devils scored the first five points of the second half, but came no closer the rest of the way.

UNLV eventually built a 77-61 lead with 7:11 left, their largest lead of the game.

Busch finds it's good to be good, better to be lucky

BY MIKE HARRIS
The Associated Press

For Kurt Busch, last season was about being in the right place at the right time — on and off the racetrack.

So far in 2005, more of the same.

Busch, the reigning champion, is back atop the NASCAR Nextel Cup points standings heading into Sunday's race at Atlanta Motor Speedway, thanks to the sanctioning body taking 25 points away from Las Vegas race winner Jimmie Johnson after his car failed a post-race inspection.

Busch, off to a great start this season with finishes of second, third and second, went into last Sunday's race leading Johnson by five points and came away from his latest runner-up finish trailing by 15 points.

The rivalry against Johnson after his Chevrolet failed the minimum height requirement put Busch back on top by 10 points.

Racing notes

Busch said it's much too early for the points, or having the series lead, to make much of a difference.

"We're only three races into this deal, and March is way too early to talk about where you are in the points," Busch said.

"Obviously, we want to go out and earn as many points as we possibly can — that's what is important right now, and necessarily whether we're in first, second, third or whatever."

Based on the first three races, it appears the championship could be a season-long battle between Roush Racing and Hendrick Motorsports.

Hendrick drivers Jeff Gordon and Johnson have won two of the first three races and rookie Kyle Busch — Kurt's younger brother — won the pole at California and finished second at Las Vegas.

Greg Biffle got the other race victory and, along with Kurt Busch, Carl Edwards and Mark Martin, is part of a Roush four-man charge for the top nine in the driver standings.

"This penalty certainly won't affect the way we have to race against these guys in the future, because right now it looks like they'll be the ones to beat further down the road," Kurt Busch said. "So the penalty is nothing we're focusing on. They've been fast in all three races this year, and I don't see any sign of that changing."

This isn't even the first time he has found himself in the points lead because of a penalty.

Dale Earnhardt Jr. was docked 25 points for uttering a curse during a TV interview following a victory last October at Talladega. That cost Junior the points lead and thrust Busch to the top, where he remained to the end of the season.

Gambling game: A gamble that paid off last Sunday in Las Vegas may have Rusty Wallace and his team rolling the dice more often this season.

Wallace was outside the top 20 for most of the race before he and crew chief Larry Carter agreed to unplug the right front shock absorber during a late pit stop — a move that worked well enough for Wallace to finish a respectable 12th.

"We were hedging on making that call to unplug the shock in favor of maintaining track position, but we figured being satisfied with running 22nd just wasn't enough," said Wallace, who's in his final season. "We finally made the call to go for it and got us a decent finish out of the day."

"I'd say we learned from that and we'll be willing to take more chances during the rest of the races."

Wallace goes into Atlanta seventh in the driver standings. Had

he finished 22nd in Vegas, the 1989 series champion would be 11th.

Stat of the week: General Motors drivers have been nearly unbeatable since Atlanta Motor Speedway's oval was reconfigured in 1997.

In the 15 races since the D-shaped track was lengthened from 1.522 miles to 1.54 miles and the start-finish line was moved to what had been the backstretch, GM cars have won 14 times, including no fewer than 10 consecutive races in NASCAR's top series, won five races and Chevrolets won nine, including the last four.

Tops among the GM drivers is Bobby Labonte, who won four times in Pontiacs and in spring 2003 in a Chevy. Dale Earnhardt Jr. is tying for second with Jimmie Johnson won the fall event last year and Jeff Gordon took the fall race in 2003.

The only non-GM victory at Atlanta during the span was by Kurt Busch in a Ford in the fall 2002 event.

NCAA tournament: Austin Regional

Utah beats UTEP, hostile crowd

The Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. — Call this one a road victory for Utah. Neutral court No way.

UTEP might as well have been playing at home with the raucous following from El Paso that packed McKale Center on Thursday.

With the deafening crowd against them, the Utes escaped with a 60-54 first-round NCAA tournament victory thanks to a brilliant bit of defense by Tim Drisdorn and a critical rebound by exhausted center Andrew Bogut.

Utah led 56-54 when UTEP's lightning-fast point guard, Filbert Rivera, drove the lane. Drisdorn stripped the ball away, then was fouled by Rivera. The Utah junior's two free throws made it 58-54 with 1:54 seconds to play.

"I kind of took a gamble and came up with the steal," Drisdorn said. "It was a little bit, a little defense."

Jason Williams tried to score inside, but Bogut got a piece of the ball, then saved the rebound as he crashed to the floor. Marc Jackson's two free throws with 5.6 seconds to go sealed a victory that left the Utes 6-0 in NCAA tournament games at McKale Center.

Utah (28-5) had won 23 of its last 25 games.

Bogut, who played all 40 minutes, had 24 points, 11 rebounds and four blocked shots, but the Australian 7-footer, who could be the first player taken in this year's NBA Draft if he turns pro as expected, was not 2-for-2 for shooting in the second half and made only four of 10 free throws.



Texas El-Paso's Will Kimble (52) battles Utah's Andrew Bogut for a rebound during a first-round NCAA tournament game. Utah won 60-54.

He didn't have a field goal in the final 17 minutes of the game.

"When they have three guys guarding him, you're not going to get him the ball," Utah coach Ray Giaconetti said.

The Utes' attempts to get the ball inside resulted in several of their 18 turnovers. Bryant Markson was the only other Ute in double figures with 10 points.

Omar Thomas, one of the great stories of the tournament after

overcoming a childhood in which his father and two brothers were imprisoned for murder, scored 24 in his final college game, many of the points coming on drives around the slow Bogut. Rivera added 11 points for the Miners (22-8).

The sixth-seeded Utes play Oklahoma on Saturday in the second round of the Austin Regional.

In other games Thursday:

NCAA tournament: Syracuse Regional

Langford's saga mirrors that of Kansas

BY JEFF LATZKE

The Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — First, Kansas guard Keith Langford busted up his ankle. Then he came down with the flu.

If things weren't topsy-turvy enough for the Jayhawks heading into their first-round NCAA Syracuse Regional matchup with 14th-seeded Bucknell on Friday night, Langford's left ankle — oh, and that pesky flu, too — flared up again.

Between their No. 2 scorer's stomach problems, ankle sprains and headaches, it's no wonder the third-seeded Jayhawks (23-6) have been a bit discomfited.

"They've lost five of their last eight games and couldn't be any more unpredictable as they seek their third Final Four appearance in four years."

Even coach Bill Self isn't sure what to expect. His answers about Langford, who sat out some parts of the Jayhawks' public practice and participated in others, were filled with one "I don't know" after another.

"I don't know if he will play to-

morrow night," Self said Thursday, reasoning that Langford's ankle would probably physically allow him to play against Bucknell (22-9), but he might not feel up to it.

"I think he's feeling better, but I don't know if he has enough strength to play," Self added.

Langford initially hurt the ankle practicing for the Jayhawks' regular-season finale against Missouri, then aggravated it during the 72-68 loss to the Tigers.

On his way to recovery, Langford came down with the flu and was unable to play in the Big 12 tournament last week. Without him, the Jayhawks beat Kansas State in the quarterfinals then lost to Oklahoma State in the semis.

He spent three days in the hospital and it appeared the journey was over.

"He gets out and tells us, 'The ankle's feeling pretty good, I just don't have any strength or stamina,'" Self said. "He starts practicing, he's limping and the ankle gets to woofin' and he has a relapse of the flu."

"It's just been unbelievable. It really has."

Whether Langford's plays may not be enough to fix what's been ailing the Jayhawks. Even when Langford had two healthy ankles and no signs of the flu, the Jayhawks lost three games in a row for the first time in more than a decade.

They ended that skid with an impressive offensive performance in an 81-79 victory over Oklahoma State. Another solid game against the Cowboys ended in a 78-75 loss without Langford in the Big 12 tournament. In between, the Jayhawks struggled against Kansas State and Missouri.

"I think we've really been working hard to regain our focus," forward Christian Moody said. "We went through a couple tough games, but I think that coach has done a really good job of getting us prepared for Bucknell and getting our minds ready for the tournament."

Moody missed two games during the losing skid with a stapling infection in his knee, and leading

No. 17 Oklahoma 84, Niagara 67

Kentucky overcame its own uninspired play and the inspirational support Niagara got from former star Calvin Murphy and the cancer-stricken mother of coach Joe Mihailich.

Drew Lavender led six Sooners in double figures with 17 points. The Sooners (25-7) struggled with 46 percent field-goal shooting, but were helped by solid defense that harassed the Eagles (20-10) into 16 turnovers.

Juan Mendez led the 14th-seeded Eagles with 22 points and 15 rebounds.

Kentucky 72, Eastern Kentucky 64

At Indianapolis, Kelenia Azubuike and Chuck Hayes each scored 16 points and second-seeded Kentucky dominated the middle.

Kentucky (26-5) extended its record for NCAA tournament victories to 94 and improved to 37-9 in NCAA tournament openers.

Matt Witt led the Colonels (22-9) with 21 points.

After beating a rival located only 30 miles from its Lexington, Ky., campus, Kentucky now faces Cincinnati, located just 75 miles to the north.

Cincinnati 76, Iowa 64: Jason Maxiell had 22 points, nine rebounds, six blocked shots and two steals for Cincinnati (25-7).

With the 6-foot-7 Maxiell repeatedly swatting away shots under the basket and Iowa (21-12) unable to hit from the outside, the Bearcats limited the Hawkeyes to just one field goal and three free throws in the first 11 minutes.

Jeff Horner had 12 points for Iowa.

Second Round Saturday, March 19

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Semifinals Friday, March 25

Duke/Delaware State vs. Stanford/Mississippi State Syracuse/Vermont-Montclair State Kentucky vs. Oklahoma

Sunday, March 27

Championship

ALBUQUERQUE REGIONAL

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NCAA tournament: Chicago Region

Wis.-Milwaukee roars out the Tide

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Wisconsin-Milwaukee's players didn't madly chase each other around the floor or do anything extraordinary to celebrate the biggest victory in school history.

The Panthers are above all that. This was business as usual. "We expected this," forward Joah Tucker said. "It wasn't a big surprise for us."

Wisconsin-Milwaukee, whose players were briefly barred from practicing Wednesday when they couldn't produce their student IDs, pulled off the first stunner of the NCAA tournament, beating Alabama 83-73 on Thursday.

Now everyone knows the Panthers.

Tucker and Ed McCants scored 21 points apiece as Milwaukee (25-5) won its first NCAA tournament game in its second try. Two years ago, the 12th-seeded Panthers lost to Penn State 70-69.

The underrated Horizon League champions finished the job this time, outplaying one of the Southeastern Conference's top programs and continuing a trend of No. 12s beating No. 5s in March. That first-round matchup has produced an upset in 16 of the past 17 tournaments, the only exception being in 2000.

"This is an atypical team from the Horizon League," Alabama coach Mark Gottfried said. "Kennedy [Wisconsin's] had 20 points and Ronald Steele 16 for the Crimson Tide (24-8), who had hoped to have another run like a year ago when they made it to the round of eight. But Alabama was outplayed by a lesser-known opponent from a little-known conference playing in a friendly arena."

In other games Thursday in the Chicago Region:

No. 1 Illinois 67, Fairfield 44; **No. 5s: Indiana, Panthers**, the 16th-seeded Knights took it to the nation's top-ranked team in

the first half, trailing by only one point at halftime before succumbing after Illinois' 26-9 run that started the second half.

In the opening 20 minutes, Fairfield Dickinson (23-10) outscored Illinois (33-1) inside 20-10 and won the rebounding battle.

Illinois guard Dee Brown, who had a team-high 19 points, called his team's first-half performance "kind of embarrassing," especially before a huge crowd dominated by Illini orange-clad fans.

"We had breakdowns on things we don't normally do," Illini coach Bruce Weber said. "We've had a tendency, against teams that maybe don't have quite the reputation, to not play great basketball all the time."

But Illinois led 58-39 with 5:14 remaining and the Knights didn't get closer than 11.

Luther Head had 13 points for Illinois, while James Augustine added 15 rebounds and 11 points. FDU won the overall rebounding battle 42-30.

Gordon Klaiber had 24 points and eight rebounds to lead FDU, which was making its first NCAA appearance.

Nevada 61, Texas 57: At Indianapolis, the Wolf Pack made an improbable comeback in the final 2 minutes, scoring the last eight points of the game in their second straight first-round victory.

The Wolf Pack (25-6), who matched Texas' shocker, survived a dreadful night by Western Athletic Conference player of the year Nick Fazekas. Kevin Pinkney, who had 14 points, and Fazekas accounted for more than 41 percent of Nevada's points during the season.

With Pinkney in foul trouble and Fazekas missing shots, they needed help. Mo Charlo came off the bench to score 12 points and Ramon Sessions added 11.

Fazekas finished with shooting 3-for-14 against Texas' aggressive zone.



Wisconsin-Milwaukee guard Boo Davis (24) celebrates his team's 83-73 victory Thursday over No. 5 seed Alabama.

Texas center Jason Klotz and backup guard Kenny Taylor nearly rallied the Longhorns in the second half. They combined for 26 of 31 points in the last 20 minutes and helped give Texas (20-11) a 57-53 lead and 2-24 to go.

Klotz finished with a career-high 20 points, while Taylor added 12, and Brad Buckman had 14 points and 11 rebounds. Daniel Gibson, the Big 12 freshman of the year, scored eight points.

No. 9 Arizona 66, Utah State 53: At Boise, Idaho, the Wildcats avoided a second straight first-round exit by rallying from a slight halftime deficit and dominating the second half.

Utah State (24-8) shot 53 percent from the field this season, but was just 8-for-30 (26.7 percent) in the second half. Arizona kept turning the misses into easy points, getting the ball inside to Channing Frye as he scored 13 of his 17 points in the second half.

Salim Stoudamire fought through asthma and scored 17 points for the Wildcats (28-6). Hassan Adams and Chris Rodgers scored 10 apiece.

"We were able to cut their lead a couple of times, but they weren't going to have any of that," Utah State coach Stew Morrill said.

Jaycee Carroll led No. 14 seed Utah State with 18 points, going 5-for-10 from three-point range. Nate Harris was the only other Aggie to score in double figures with 12.

No. 14 Boston College 85, Pennsylvania 65: At Cleveland, the Eagles got back to playing like the team that didn't lose a game until Feb. 8.

"We were very aggressive, we made shots," said Craig Smith, who had 15 points and 13 rebounds. "It was kind of like how we started 20-0. I definitely feel we have our swagger back."

Jared Dudley led a versatile attack with 18 points. The Eagles went 7-for-10 on three-pointers in the first half, when Penn drew in its defense, then passed inside for easy baskets and pulled away in the second.

The Quakers (20-9) didn't have enough firepower to hang with Pac. Tim Begley, the Ivy League's Player of the Year, had 19 points.

UAB: Blazers fluster LSU

UAB, FROM BACK PAGE

gers had 21 turnovers — 12 in the first half — that led to 20 points, and had trouble controlling the ball even when UAB backed off, dribbling the ball off their feet out of bounds several times.

Cardell Johnson was particularly effective against Tack Minor, pestering LSU's point guard into seven turnovers, including two in LSU's first three possessions.

"We attacked Minor. He got cut off early in the game and when he didn't get a call, it kind of hurt their team," UAB's Demario Edmonds said.

It sure did. Araid of having the ball swiped away, the Tigers had trouble getting the shots they wanted, settling for long three-pointers and forcing shots in the lane. LSU shot just 35 percent and was six of 31 on three-pointers.

Brandon Bass, the SEC's player of the year, led LSU with 25 points and 12 rebounds, but was the only player to hit more than half his shots (8-for-10). Darrel Mitchell, LSU's second-leading scorer (13.5 points), had two points on one of 14 shooting and missed all nine of his attempts from long range.

"They're a scrappy team," Mitchell said. "They made us turn the ball over a little bit and they got easy baskets off of it, and they capitalized on our turnover."

LSU's defense set up its quick-hit offense, leading to plenty of fast-break chances, spot-up three-pointers and open looks before the Tigers were fully setup.

The Blazers took control with a 12-2 run midway through the first half that gave them a 26-15 lead. UAB held LSU to 10-of-31 shooting in the first half and led 41-29 at halftime. It only got worse for the Tigers in the second half.

LSU started off with a turnover and fell behind 59-34 after UAB opened with a 13-0 run in the first 6 minutes. LSU made a late run to cut UAB's lead to 75-66 with just over a minute left.

NCAA tournament: Albuquerque Region

Top-seed Washington starts fast, holds on vs. Montana

The Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — Washington has received plenty of criticism about No. 1 seed and didn't add a lot to end it Thursday after an 88-77 victory over No. 16 seed Montana.

After charging to a 19-point lead against the Grizzlies (18-13), Montana kept it closer than expected.

"We came out with a lot of intensity and rotated guys who then kept up the intensity, but then we kind of got cool down the stretch," Washington's Brandon Roy said. "Being a No. 1 team has helped because you're thinking about it the whole game."

Roy had 17 points and The Simpsons added 15.

Montana was led by Kamarr Davis' 24 points. The Grizzlies rallied from a dismal start before fading against the Pac-10 champion.

The Huskies (28-5) face Pacific in the second round.

In other games Thursday in the Albuquerque Region:

No. 22 Pacific 79, Pittsburgh 71: At Boise, Idaho, Christian Matlock led Pacific with 17 points, coming back after hitting his head hard on the court in the first half and Mike Webb scored a career-high 15 — all on three-pointers — for Pacific (27-3).

"Being here last year and knowing what it takes to get a victory definitely helped this team," said David Doubly, who scored 11 of

his 17 in the second half for Pacific.

Carl Krauser scored 25 of his 27 points in the second half as the Panthers (20-9) furiously tried to make up for a dismal first half.

No. 5 Wake Forest 70, Chattanooga 54: At Cleveland, Chris Paul scored 20 points in his return from a one-game suspension and second-seeded Wake Forest shook off a horrible first half.

Paul added six rebounds and five assists for Wake Forest (27-5), which will face West Virginia winner in the second round.

Chris Brown scored 14 points for Chattanooga (20-11).

West Virginia 63, Creighton 61: At Cleveland, Tyrone Sall

blocked Nate Funk's three-point attempt, then raced downcourt for a fast-break dunk with 29 seconds to go to break a tie.

Kevin Pittsnogle had 17 points for No. 7 seed West Virginia (22-10), which gave coach John Beilein his 500th victory. Funk had 23 points for Creighton (23-11).

No. 10 Gonzaga 74, Winthrop 64: At Tucson, Ariz., Adam Morrison scored 27 points to lead third-seeded Gonzaga (26-4).

The loss snapped No. 14 seed Winthrop's 18-game winning streak, the longest in the nation. Gonzaga won its 13th in a row.

Neither team led by more than eight until the final minutes, and it was tied four times in the second half.

Gonzaga will face Texas Tech in the second round.

No. 24 Texas Tech 78, UCLA 66: At Tucson, Ariz., Ronald Ross scored 28 points and sixth-seeded Texas Tech shot a season-high 62 percent from the field.

Texas Tech (21-10) improved to 2-2 in NCAA tournament games under coach Bob Knight, who is 44-23 in 27 NCAA appearances. It was only Knight's fourth victory in 12 tournament games since 1995.

SPORTS



Wade, Shaq help Heat complete season sweep of Lakers, Page 25

UAB's pressmen flatten LSU



LSU's Glen Davis (34) is hounded by Alabama-Birmingham's Ernest Little on Thursday. The Tigers (20-10) committed 21 turnovers, leading to 20 points for the Blazers (22-10).



Alabama-Birmingham's Brandon Tobias (above) cheers as his 11th-seeded team topples a No. 6 seed 82-68. Louisiana State players Glen Davis (left) and Darrell Mitchell react to a delay-of-game call, one of several turnovers that led to the Tigers' 25-point deficit early in the second half.

AP photos

Tigers wilt under Blazers' stifling pressure defense

BY JOHN MARSHALL
The Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — Pressing, trapping and causing havoc, UAB's defense was at its frenetic best.

Yep, the Blazers could be ready for another deep run in the NCAA tournament.

Marvett McDonald had 21 points and hit five three-pointers, and 11th-seeded Alabama-Birmingham used its stingy defense to pull off another upset, knocking off Louisiana State 82-68 on Thursday night in the first round of the NCAA tournament.

"Basically, they hadn't faced pressure like we've given all year long," UAB's Donell Taylor said. "They were kind of thinking we would come out a little weak and they'd be able to do what they want to do, but we got in those guys' grill and they were kicking the ball off their feet and throwing passes at each other's knees. We just stepped our defense up a whole lot more."

They're doing it at just the right time. The Blazers (22-10) reached the round of 16 last year after beating Washington and top-seeded Kentucky, and seem to have that same kind of confidence after taking out the Chicago Regional's sixth seed.

Next up for UAB is third-seeded Arizona, which had trouble with No. 14 Utah State before pulling away in the second half for a 66-53 victory.

"What a defensive performance by our team," UAB coach Mike Anderson said. "I thought our guys were clicking on a lot of different cylinders. We've been playing some



pretty good basketball and now you're seeing some of the parts starting to come together."

LSU (20-10) got into the NCAA tournament with an eight-game winning streak and a one-point overtime loss to Kentucky in the SEC tournament semifinal game, but the Tigers were no match for UAB's in-your-face defense.

LSU forced things once it fell behind and

didn't find a rhythm offensively until it was too late, quickly ending its first trip to the NCAA tournament since 2003.

"We just didn't handle it very well," LSU coach John Brady said. "I really think some of those (turnovers) were unforgotten and we got tentative. Then when we didn't make a couple of shots we would normally make, I think a couple of our guys lost the confidence they had played with the last month or six weeks."

UAB's attacking defense gave the Tigers fits immediately.

Using a seemingly endless bench — all 12 players saw action in the first half — the Blazers pressed the length of the floor and trapped in halfcourt sets, bounding LSU into mistakes and disrupting the flow of its offense. The Ti-

SEE UAB ON PAGE 31



Wis.-Milwaukee topples fifth-seeded Crimson Tide; Illinois, Arizona get through tough tests

Page 31



Utah's clutch play in final minute subdues UTEP; Kentucky, Oklahoma march on

Page 30

Washington and Wake Forest overcome sloppy halves to reach second round, Page 31